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MARGARET,

THE

PEARL OF NAVARRE.

A NARRATIVE COMPILED FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES.

Mrs. S. T. Martyn

There is nothing sweeter on earth than the heart of a woman in which piety dwells. MARTIN LUTHER.

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MARGARET,

THE PEARL OF NAVARRE.

I.

The Castle of Amboise.

The royal castle of Amboise in France, long a favorite residence of the French sovereigns, was a noble and kingly abode, magnificent alike in its adornings and extent. There Blanche of Castile, the gentle and pious but ill-used queen of Louis XI., spent long years of solitude and suffering, cheered only by the society of her young son, afterwards Charles VIII., to whose training she devoted her-

self with a zeal that knew no intermission. When Charles succeeded his father, his recollections of the castle were so far from pleasant, that he shunned Amboise after the death of his admirable mother, and his wife Anne of Bretagne shared the dislike of her husband; so that during his short reign, and that of his successor, Louis XII., the chateau was comparatively deserted.

But in 1504 the solitude of Amboise was broken by the arrival of a gay and brilliant court. It had been selected by Louis as the residence of Louisa of Savoy, Duchess d'Angoulême, and mother of the young Francis, who was heir-presumptive to the throne of France. A bitter rivalry had long existed between the queen of Louis, Anne of Bretagne, and Madame d'Angoulême, rendered more intense by the fact that the latter was mother of a fair son, while she had

given birth only to daughters, who were excluded by the salique law from succeeding to the throne. Louis, who had a kind and feeling heart, and was justly styled "the father of his people," loved the princely boy who was to succeed him almost with the affection of a father; but he was weary of contention, and to put an end to it, requested the countess with her two children, Francis d'Angoulême and Margaret of Valois,* to take up her abode at Amboise, where a retinue suitable to their rank was provided for them,

* As a descendant of the royal family of Valois, Margaret was known in her girlhood as Margaret of Valois. When in her fifteenth year she married the Duke d'Alençon, she took the titles of Madame and Duchess d'Alençon, though still retaining her family name. On the accession of Francis to the throne, he gave to his sister the title of "Madame de France," an honor belonging only to those nearest of kin to the reigning monarch; and by her second marriage with Henry d'Albret, she became queen of Navarre. Hence the various titles by which she is designated in this little work.

and Pierre de Rohan, Marshal de Gié, appointed tutor to the young prince.

It was a sultry afternoon in August, 1505, and the busy hum of life and gayety that usually filled the saloons and corridors of the old chateau was hushed in a stillness so profound, that nothing was heard but the plash of the fountain as it fell into a marble basin in the court-yard. Madame d'Angoulême was taking her afternoon repose, and most of the lords and ladies in waiting had followed her example, leaving the young princess Margaret free to wander at will in the garden of the chateau, laid out in the quaint, formal style then prevalent throughout France. In company with her favorite greyhound, the young girl had traversed the pleached walks and shaded alleys, till, growing weary, she seated herself beneath a spreading sycamore, and drawing a book from her

pocket, was soon absorbed in its contents.

Margaret of Valois, afterwards the most beautiful and brilliant woman of her age, was at this time in her fourteenth year, tall and finely formed, with a pliant grace in every movement, which charmed the beholder, and a dignity of manner very unusual in one who had just emerged from childhood. Her eloquent face was the mirror of her soul. Through her perfect features every expression of intellect and feeling shone so clearly, that "one might almost say her body thought."

Louisa of Savoy, the mother of the young princess, though a woman of splendid endowments, was distinguished far more for the immorality of her life than for her mental qualities; and as the women of her court were chosen by her for their talent at intrigue rather than

their virtue, the atmosphere in which the young Margaret had grown up was impure and injurious. But God, whose chosen instrument she was, had purposes of mercy towards her, and through his grace she had escaped the moral contagion, and had grown up in the midst of a corrupt court pure and spotless as a lily among thorns. Passionately fond of reading and study, her love of books had been to her a safeguard; while her progress in knowledge was such, that she soon outstripped all her young companions, even in those severer branches which are usually regarded as beyond the pale of female acquirement. Wise as the wisest, wittier than the wittiest, Margaret, by the force of her intellect and the fascination of her manner, made her way among the strange and discordant elements of which the court of Louis and that of her mother were composed,

without stooping from her lofty height or sharing in the general corruption.

The princess was still bending over her book, when suddenly a sound was heard, and with a glad cry the greyhound bounded from her side. Raising her head, she threw back the clustering ringlets that shaded her brow, and a bright smile broke over her face as a boy somewhat younger than herself came running towards her, exclaiming:

"I was sure of finding you here, *mignonne*, [darling,] even if Fido had not come to meet me. But where have you been hiding all day, and what has occupied you?"

It needed not the look of fondness with which Margaret greeted the newcomer, to tell the beholder that it was her brother who stood beside her. The wonderful likeness between those young faces could not be mistaken. Both had

the same dark gray eyes, full of liquid light; the same oval face and high forehead, crowned with a profusion of chestnut-brown, wavy hair; the same full red lips, round which a smile was always playing; and the same eagle glance, softened in the sister by an expression of feminine sweetness.

Motioning Francis to a seat by her side, she said gayly:

"I have been busy enough through the day, I assure you, though now I may seem idle. Father Francis was with me in the morning, explaining the mysteries of Plato and Aristotle; then Madame de Villeret drove me almost distracted with tent-stitch and cross-stitch; after which I had a charming gallop on my Barbary jennet; then dinner, and the most delightful of all, liberty! But you, *mon ami*, [my friend,] what have you been doing?"

The boy suppressed a yawn as he replied:

"Oh, the same old story. M. de Gié tries hard to make me studious and learned; but the task is beyond him, as he will find to his cost. What a pity 'tis, *mignonne*, that you were not Francis and I Margaret. You would learn every thing and know how to manage every body; while my little bark would glide merrily over the waters, courting the summer breezes, and gathering only the sweets, without the bitter of life."

"For shame, brother," replied the princess; "if any other had dared thus to speak of Francis d'Angoulême, I should be seriously angry."

"It is true, nevertheless, sweet sister. I had rather be out with hawk and hound than to understand all the sciences, and love better the society of my mother's ladies than the wisest of the

old Greeks and Romans. But this is not what I came to say. I have tidings for you. What think you they are?"

"Indeed I cannot guess. Be generous, and bestow them upon me."

"Well, then, you must know that I heard M. de Gié announce to Madame that the Court now at Blois, purposes to come to Amboise before returning to Paris. Judging from the countenance of her highness, the news was not as welcome to her as to me."

"Comes the queen to the chateau?" inquired Marguerite.

"Assuredly, with her two hundred Breton guards, and scores of ladies in waiting."

Margaret's brow clouded.

"I fear," she said in a low tone, "for the consequences of this meeting. There is no love between Anne of Bretagne

and our mother, who will look upon this pompous display as a studied insult."

"It may well be so," the boy said thoughtfully; "but when the king and queen of France become the guests of Madame d'Angoulême, she is incapable of forgetting the duties of hospitality. So cheer up, *mignonne;* we must have your very brightest smiles to greet our royal cousins when they come."

"Have no fears for me. I owe the good king too much for his past kindness to fail in my duty to him; and for the honor of our house, we must make Amboise as attractive as possible."

Three days after this conversation, the royal cortége arrived at Amboise, and were received by the duchess with a stately courtesy which diminished the anticipated triumph of Queen Anne, and compelled her to acknowledge that, as

chatelaine in her own castle, the demeanor of her rival was perfect.

A brilliant suite of noble ladies attended the queen, among whom two lovely young princesses shone conspicuous. One was Germaine de Foix, niece of the king, and one of the most beautiful women in France, who soon afterwards became the successor of the celebrated Isabella of Castile, by marrying Ferdinand of Aragon, then a widower. The other was Susanne de Bourbon, only child and heiress of the Lady of Beaujeu, daughter of Louis XI. In the midst of this gay assemblage, Margaret of Valois, young as she was, acted her part with a dignity and grace that won all hearts, and caused the king to exclaim:

"That slender girl would grace any throne in Europe; but as for this great boy," playfully pulling one of the long

locks of Francis, "he will one day spoil all."

The Marshal de Gié had planned a series of festivities, according to the taste of the day, for the amusement of the Court; but the ill-health of the king rendered him incapable of enjoying them, and the visit passed off quietly, without any important results, though the plan of a marriage between Francis and the little Claude, still almost an infant, was then first talked of by the duchess and her royal kinsman. To this, however, it was impossible to gain the consent of the queen, whose dislike of Madame d'Angoulême extended to her children. Louis therefore was compelled seemingly to relinquish the plan, though at heart resolved on carrying it out when the fitting time should arrive.

At the period of his visit to Amboise, Louis was involved in difficulties with

Pope Julius II., which, had there been a Luther then in France, might have ended in the separation of that kingdom from the see of Rome. The controversy had been submitted by the king to the universities of Paris, who had decided in his favor; but in spite of this, Queen Anne took sides with the pope, and that with such earnestness, that Louis became indignant, and exclaimed:

"Why, my Breton dame, any one hearing you condemn so decidedly what our most celebrated universities have approved, would imagine that you esteem yourself wiser and more learned than the rest of mankind. Have your confessors never told you that women have no voice in the church?"

The queen was silenced, but not convinced; and accustomed to have her own way in most things, availed herself of

her rights, as sovereign over Brittany, to forbid the attendance of the bishops of that province at the council convened at Pisa with intentions hostile to the pope. The health of Louis was rapidly failing. His imperious wife knew well how to flatter and cajole him into the adoption of her own measures, and as the truths of the gospel had never been received into his heart, he gave way, and the papacy was once more triumphant in France.

When the king departed from Amboise, he left there, in compliance with the request of the duchess, three young noblemen, the flower of his nobility, as companions for the youthful prince. One of these young men, Charles de Montpensier, afterwards Constable of France and Duke de Bourbon, was destined to exert an influence over the whole life of Margaret of Valois, whose attachments

had a depth and constancy rarely found in that age and country. Proud, reserved, and self-centred, the manner of Montpensier repelled most of those who approached him, and was especially irritating to the ardent and impulsive Francis, who found in M. de Gouffier a companion much better suited to his taste.

But there was one in the castle who did not fail to appreciate a character so singularly at variance with that of the French nobility in general. In the society of the young and beautiful Margaret, the grave student laid aside his reserve, and unbent as he had never done before. In him she found what her heart had vainly craved—entire sympathy with her own tastes and pursuits; and as she listened to his glowing words, she believed him to be the knight "without fear and without reproach" of whom

she had dreamed, but whom she never expected to behold.

It was not strange that two young people thus brought together, who were so unlike those about them, should feel strongly drawn towards each other, though Margaret, who was little more than a child, and hitherto devoted to her studies, had no suspicion of the state of her heart, and looked on Montpensier only as another brother. But Francis, the boy of twelve, was more clear-sighted, and urged on by M. de Gouffier, who hated Charles de Montpensier, he insulted that young nobleman, and even proposed a hostile meeting in the garden of the chateau. His tutor, M. de Gié, fortunately became aware of the proposition in season to prevent it, and rebuked Francis so severely, that the boy confessed his fault and begged forgiveness of Montpensier. It was granted; but

the wound still rankled, and Montpensier resolved to tear himself away from a spot in which nothing but pain and disappointment could await him.

He accordingly sought an interview with Madame d'Angoulême, and announced to her his intention of leaving the castle that very day. Absorbed in her own projects of pleasure and ambition, the duchess heard him without one word of regret or remonstrance; while Margaret, pale and trembling, feared to speak, lest her emotion should betray her. With her accustomed courtesy she bade him farewell, and saw him leave the castle; but this abrupt departure gave the princess the first heart-pang she had ever yet experienced.

Her idolized brother was still left to her, however, and in his society she found content and happiness, though Charles of Bourbon was never forgotten.

Throughout his varied and stormy career she watched him with deep interest, and in after-years, when other dear ties had been formed, and her heart had found rest in Jesus, his name was always remembered in her prayers.

II.

The Marriage of the Princess.

Margaret of Valois, chosen and called of God to become the nursing mother of the French Reformation, and the first princess of a royal house in Europe who embraced the reformed faith, was at this time a member of the Romish church, though with girlish thoughtlessness she cared little for its rites and ceremonies, and never went to mass or confession unless urged by her mother to do so. The clear intellect and cultivated mind of the young princess led her to look with disgust on the mummeries of the priests and the terrible discrepancy between the immorality of their lives and the pure doctrines preached by a few among them.

In the witty and graphic, though sometimes coarse portraitures drawn by Margaret, we have a striking picture of the manners and morals of the lower clergy of that time.

"I have often heard the princess," says Brantome, "narrate tales of the priests and monks to my grandmother, who was her lady in waiting, and always accompanied her mistress, riding near her litter, and taking charge of her inkhorn."

Still keenly alive as she was, even in childhood, to the defects of the Romish church, she knew as yet nothing better; and influenced by the example of those about her, and above all by her love for her brother, Margaret contented herself with guarding the purity of her own character, while she looked with too much complacence on the follies and frailties of others. The time had not

yet come when a purer faith was to open her eyes to the evil nature of all sin, and lead her to exclaim with the apostle, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Margaret and her brother had joined the court at Paris, and were residing at the palace of the Tournelles, when the serious illness of the king induced him to take measures for the settlement in life of the princess, whose hand had already been sought by the first sovereigns of Europe. Henry VII. of England, whose queen, Elizabeth of York, had recently died, was one of these suitors; but his proposal was rejected by the king, from motives of state policy.

It was at length resolved in council to bestow the hand of the princess on Charles, Duke d'Alençon, one of the princes of the blood royal of France. Young as she was, the mind and heart

of Margaret were matured far beyond her years, and she felt most deeply the miseries that must attend a marriage thus forced upon her. Her high spirit revolted at the intellectual inferiority of the duke, who was weak, vain, and capricious, and more than suspected of cowardice, a fault which in that age could never be forgiven. But her tears and entreaties were alike vain. Madame d'Angoulême, from pecuniary motives, was willing to accept the duke as her son-in-law; and when Margaret knelt before her, representing how unsuited they were to each other, and how wretched her life must be spent in such society, she answered coldly,

"The daughters of France have always been disposed of by others for the good of the state. There is nothing in your case to call for a departure from the usual custom. Control yourself, for

I am not fond of scenes, and find this rather wearisome."

What mattered it to Louisa of Savoy that a young and warm heart was breaking, if the wealth of the Duke d'Alençon was henceforth to be under her control? What mattered it that the duke was not only deficient in all those brilliant qualities for which Margaret was distinguished, but did not even possess the negative merit of appreciating them in another, and that he looked with jealous distrust on the acquirements which raised her so far above his own level, and made her the pride and ornament of the court?

When this ill-omened marriage took place, with a pomp and pageantry that seemed to mock the wretchedness of the bride, Margaret declared to one of her friends, that as she could never give her heart to her husband, she would henceforth devote it to God. In fact, though

as yet she knew not Him whom she ignorantly sought, she mingled with the great world rather as a looker-on than a partaker in its gayeties, while yet she shone like a bright particular star, charming and captivating all hearts. Passionately fond of letters, and gifted with a genius which embraced the whole circle of arts and sciences, she sought in literary pursuits the peace of mind denied her at the domestic hearth.

Almost immediately after the marriage of Margaret, the little princess Claude, a child of six, was formally betrothed by the king to Francis d'Angoulême. In the society and affection of this child, who had been educated by her mother in strict seclusion, the youthful Duchess d'Alençon found a sweet solace for the cares which beset her path. She loved the timid and gentle princess for her own sake, as well as for

the relation she sustained to the beloved brother in whom all her hopes were centred, and was unwearied in her efforts to form the mind and manners of the child-bride in conformity with the taste of Francis.

Claude had not yet attained her twelfth year when her marriage took place, so soon after the death of her mother, Anne of Bretagne, that the bride and bridegroom, the princes of the blood, and all the members of the court-circle wore on that occasion dresses of deep black as mourning for the deceased queen. Margaret, who understood well the character of her brother, trembled for the happiness of the meek and guileless Claude, who loved her fascinating husband with all the warmth of an innocent heart that had known no other affection. Francis was fickle and capricious, a worshipper of beauty, and a believer in the

sentiment that the regards of a king honor all on whom they rest. He had never even pretended to love the wife forced upon him by state policy; and though incapable of treating her with harshness or cruelty, his neglect pierced her heart and embittered her whole wedded life. Often, when wounded to the quick by the indifference of Francis, Claude would turn for sympathy and comfort to the bright and beautiful Margaret; nor was she ever disappointed. It was one of the finest traits in the character of the "Pearl of Valois," that she possessed a quick and delicate sympathy, which enabled her to make the joys or sorrows of others her own, and was thus enabled through life to act the part of consoler for which she was so eminently qualified.

The tie that united the young Francis and his sister was one of rare tender-

ness and strength. Nothing seemed to have power to weaken it; not even a difference of faith, which has separated so many loving hearts, could estrange a brother and sister so closely united. Francis was proud of the brilliant and gifted duchess—of her beauty, grace, and winning sweetness—and to the day of his death her influence over him was paramount to that of all others. Had her moral courage but equalled her affection, she might have been the means of saving him from many of his worst errors; but, unfortunately for both, she shrank from giving him pain, even for his own good, and loved so well to see him happy, that she forgot too often at what a price that momentary enjoyment was purchased.

Not many months after the marriage of Francis, he learned with intense chagrin that the widowed king was about to

to take another wife. From the age and debility of the monarch, the young heir had long regarded himself as standing on the steps of the throne; and this was an event which threatened to deprive him altogether of the succession, which he had been taught to consider his birthright. The thought was full of bitterness, but the son of Louisa of Savoy had learned to dissemble, and if his heart was heavy his lip was wreathed in smiles when he waited on the king to congratulate him on the approaching nuptials.

The good-natured monarch was embarrassed, and affected to treat the project as a sacrifice on his part to the wishes of his people; but Francis was not deceived, and declared to Margaret in a tone of bitterness:

"Our good cousin pretends to be indifferent on the subject, but he is a bad

actor, and I can see plainly that he already counts on a lineal successor to the throne."

"And wherefore not, dear brother?" the duchess replied, with a smile; "do you not find it natural that he should wish to leave so splendid an inheritance to a son of his own rather than to a distant branch of his family?"

"You may be right, *mignonne*, but I confess I am not enough of a philosopher to look with calmness on the loss which threatens me."

"The danger is less than you imagine," replied Margaret, whose quick wit usually led her to correct conclusions, "the king's hold on life is so slight that the excitement consequent on these festivities will, I fear, destroy it. I love the kind old man, and regret the marriage on this account more than any other, dear as your interests are to me."

Mary Tudor of England, sister of Henry VIII., a blooming maiden of sixteen, was the bride selected for the aged and decrepit monarch, and the marriage took place at Greenwich, by proxy, on the 13th of August, 1514. The bride then crossed over to Boulogne, and was met by the Duke de Vendome, who escorted her to Abbeville. The retinue of Mary was worthy the sister and bride of two powerful sovereigns, and among her maids of honor was the fair but unfortunate Anne Boleyn, then in the first flush of youthful beauty. She subsequently passed into the service of Queen Claude, and thence into that of the Duchess d'Alençon, where she became the idol of the brilliant court.

Louis was charmed with the loveliness of his young bride, and all Paris seemed intoxicated with delight. On the 5th of November she was crowned

with great pomp at the cathedral of St. Denis, and the following day made her public entry into Paris as queen of France, attended by a splendid retinue of the nobility and foreigners of distinction.

The mourning of the court was at once changed into festivity, and jousts, tilts, and tournaments succeeded each other, though the king soon manifested symptoms of his inability to endure such dissipation and excitement. The natural result speedily followed. An alarming paroxysm of gout prostrated him so that he was compelled to take his bed, from which he never arose.

When informed by his physicians that the end was near, he called for the Duke d'Angoulême, and throwing his arms about his neck, exclaimed with tears :

"Francis, I am dying. I leave my

family and subjects to your care. Never forget or neglect the awful responsibilities with which this hour invests you."

For a short time he lingered, then, with a smile of affection on his lips, he expired in the arms of his youthful successor, in less than three months from the time of Mary's arrival in France.

The first days of her mourning were not yet ended, when the young widow gave her hand privately to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, to whom she had given her heart previously to leaving England.

Francis was doubtless well pleased to be so easily freed from one whose presence in his dominions might have been troublesome; and though at first he affected great displeasure, he interceded with Henry so effectually, that the culprits were pardoned, and the duke of Suffolk again became the royal favorite.

III.

Francis I. and His Court.

The Duke d'Angoulême had just completed his twenty-first year when, in 1515, he was called to ascend the throne of France. Tall and commanding in person, with noble and expressive features, an eagle glance that seemed to read the soul, and manners marked with courteous dignity, he looked "every inch a king;" but he was naturally fickle indolent, and vain, and the influence of his mother had tended to foster, rather than subdue these vices.

Still, at the period of his accession to the throne, he seemed all that was noble and chivalric. He was the idol of the people, and his solemn entry into his good city of Paris was hailed with the

utmost enthusiasm by all classes. Above twelve hundred princes, dukes, counts, and gentlemen cavaliers were present at the games, tournaments, etc., which succeeded the coronation, and which were rendered more brilliant by the attendance of the queen, Madame d'Angoulême, and the duchess d'Alençon, with the ladies of their respective suites.

Upon his mother, the young king bestowed the title of duchess, and gave her the palace of Amboise as a place of residence, where she kept her court with almost regal state. His beloved sister Margaret was invested with the dignity of Madame de France, and at once took her place as the first lady of the realm, since Claude, the timid girl queen of Francis, had neither inclination nor ability to fill a position to which her rank entitled her. Trained up by her mother in habits of strict delicacy and

reserve, she could not stoop to pander to the corrupt tastes of her husband, who soon grew weary of her circle, and found in the court of his mother companions much better suited to his wishes.

"The queen's circle," says Brantome, "was a paradise on earth, a school of honor and virtue, and the ornament of France. On visiting it, foreigners ever met a courteous reception; and when they were expected, the queen always commanded that her ladies should be richly attired and entertain her guests in every proper way, but without any irregularity of speech or behavior."

Young as she was, Claude was fully sensible of the unfaithfulness of her husband; still she was patient and uncomplaining—a martyr to that bitterest of woman's sufferings, a despised and neglected affection. Her pure principles were proof against the corruption with

which she was surrounded; and like the moon, whose beams fall on every kind of impurity without sullying their brightness, so the gentle Claude witnessed on all sides the progress of vice, without contracting one stain.

Her younger sister Renèe, afterwards Duchess of Ferrara, and one of the firmest friends of the French Reformation, was at this time a child of six, under the charge of the queen, who found in the artless prattle and affection of the little princess a solace of which she often stood in need.

But the star of the court circle, the observed of all observers, first in honor as in place, was Margaret of Valois. Like her brother, she was handsome, witty, and fascinating, and combined with the qualities which mark true greatness those milder virtues which win the heart. It was the study of her life to

do good and to prevent evil. Devoted to her brother, who was to her in the place of mother, husband, and friends, she poured out on him all that wealth of affection, which in others more happily situated flows through so many different channels. This absorbing affection too often made her blind to the gross faults of character in the king, which in another would have awakened indignation and disgust.

Nor was her devotion unreturned. Her influence over Francis was almost unbounded; and nothing of importance was ever undertaken by him without having been first submitted to her judgment. When foreign ambassadors had been received by the king, they always went next to pay their respects to Margaret, whose fame for learning, wit, and beauty had spread over all Europe. Brantome, the quaint old chronicler,

observes that "strangers were mightily enchanted with Madame de Valois, and gave the most glowing reports of her to their countrymen."

The queen loved and trusted her above all others; the ladies of the court looked up to her with respect and admiration; and even her mother, steeped as she was in gayety and pleasure, paid an involuntary tribute to the purity of Margaret's character, by shunning her society whenever it was possible to do so. "Our court of Amboise," she said to one of her ladies, with a shrug of the shoulders, "is never itself when Madame de France honors us with a visit. She is brilliant and witty, the life of society; and yet, somehow, one is forced to have a regard for the proprieties, which I, for one, find very wearisome."

But young, beautiful, and beloved as she was—raised to the very summit of

earthly influence and greatness—Margaret of Valois was far from happy. The world that shone so brightly upon her, did not satisfy either the aspirations of her intellect or the cravings of her heart. She longed for something purer, higher, nobler; something of which she had vague dreams, though as yet she had known nothing of it. When the eyes of the world were upon her, she was apparently the gayest of the gay; but when alone in her own apartment, sighs and tears often attested the truth of the wise man's declaration: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity."

Thus was God preparing the way for the descent of the Holy Spirit into a heart which, from the circumstances of her birth and education, one would suppose must have been closed and barred against the truth. The gospel had not yet been proclaimed to her; but she

was becoming every day more disgusted with the system of faith in which she had been trained, and her spirit groped in darkness for the Guide who was to deliver her from the maze of error in which she felt herself entangled.

Meantime, while the papacy was triumphant in royal palaces and courtly saloons, among the smiling valleys of the Dauphinese Alps and on the banks of the river Durance a revival of the old Waldensian religion had already commenced. "The roots of these doctrines," says an old writer, "were continually putting forth new shoots in every direction." Not only among the peasantry, but in the manor houses scattered here and there through the districts of the High Alps about Gap and Grenoble, might be found some who dared to think for themselves, and to call the church of Rome a synagogue of Satan, rejecting

the worship of images and the intercession of saints as an abomination in the sight of God. Already the messenger was leaving his Alpine home for distant Paris who was destined, in a few years, to bear the glad tidings of salvation, not only through France, but into the neighboring cantons of Switzerland.

At this time, however, such a mission was the farthest possible from his thoughts. Like the apostle Paul, William Farel was, before his conversion, a blind and bigoted enthusiast, full of ardor, resolution, and indomitable perseverance, and devoted to the tenets of the Romish faith.

"I am horror-struck," he said in after-years, "when I consider the hours I have wasted, the honors I have paid, and the prayers I have offered and caused others to offer, to the shrines and images of the Virgin Mary and the saints."

The father of Farel, whose family belonged to the nobility, wished his son to become a soldier; but the whole soul of the young man was athirst for knowledge and light. He longed to become a great scholar, and begged permission to devote himself to study. By his persistent entreaties, he overcame the reluctance of his father, and left home for the university of Paris, then one of the most celebrated in Europe.

IV.

The Dawn of Day.

And now, after a long night of ages, daybreak was at hand, and over the hills and valleys of France the beams of the Sun of Righteousness were already falling, while the rest of the continent was still shrouded in midnight gloom. Luther was visiting Rome as a mendicant monk, creeping painfully up the steps of "Pilate's staircase," and Zwingle crossing the Alps with the confederates to fight the battles of the pope, when, in the University of Paris, the second in Christendom, the voice of the Son of God penetrated the hearts of Lefevre and Farel, calling them as he did Saul of Tarsus, and preparing them for a similar lifework.

When William Farel went from Dauphiny to Paris, full of zeal for the interests of the papacy, he spent nearly as much of his time in the churches, kneeling before the altar and calling on various saints, as in his studies. In one of these pilgrimages he noticed an aged man of plain appearance and diminutive stature, whose humility and devotion seemed so remarkable to the young scholar, that his heart was at once drawn towards him in love and reverence. This man was the celebrated Lefevre, a distinguished professor in the university, where, according to Erasmus, he occupied the very first rank. Strongly attached to the Romish church, he yet perceived that something beyond external observances, beyond philosophy and human learning, was needed to fit the soul for the enjoyment of God. Taught by the Holy Spirit, of whom he

was yet in ignorance, this good man opened the Bible, and finding there the bread of life, longed to impart it to his students, and through them to all Christendom.

But with all his learning and experience, Lefevre was a true son of the church, and submitted with the docility of a child to her requisitions. Farel soon became strongly attached to the venerable doctor, who returned his affection with all the ardor of his nature. The two thus brought together by mutual affinity, might often have been seen kneeling before the same shrine, adorning the image of the virgin with flowers, and offering in concert their fervent adorations and prayers. The friendship of the illustrious professor drew the young Farel from his obscurity, and introduced him to some of the most distinguished families in Paris, by whom

he was greatly honored, and trusted with large sums of money for the use of poorer students.

Doubtless Lefevre and his young disciple were sincere and earnest in their search after truth, yet such was their devotion to Romanism that it was long before they arrived at any clear conception of it.

"Alas!" exclaimed Farel, long afterwards, "I shudder at myself and my faults when I look back upon them, and can only say, 'What a great and wonderful work of God it is, that a man should ever have been dragged from such an abyss of idolatry.'"

Longing for something purer and better than he had ever yet found, he studied the profane authors, but without success. Then he read the lives of saints, but this only made him more dissatisfied with himself without giving him

strength to resist temptation. Every thing was tried—books, images, relics, pilgrimages, Plato, Aristotle, Mary and the Saints, but all were alike unavailing. Almost in despair, he took up the Bible, and encouraged by Lefevre read it with amazement, when he learned how different was the teaching of the Scriptures from every thing he saw around him on earth.

Standing thus on the verge of the kingdom of heaven, one step more would have placed his feet on the Rock of ages, when the strong man armed seized and plunged him again into the abyss of doubt and horror.

"Satan came suddenly upon me," he says, "that he might not lose his prey, and dealt with me according to his custom. He made me fear even to look upon the word of God, or to believe what I saw there. Alas, I said to myself, I do not

well understand these things, and doubtless give a very different meaning to the Scriptures from that which they really have. I must adhere to the interpretation of the church and of the pope."

Thus reasoning, he relapsed for a time into all his former idolatry. But Farel was a chosen servant of God, and this darkness did not long continue. The Daystar arose in his heart, dispersing the mists of error, and filling it with light and peace. It was his dear and honored friend and teacher Lefevre who was God's instrument of good to his soul; and as the aged doctor had once led on his young disciple into Romish idolatry, so now, having found a better way, he hastened to impart the good news to Farel.

Often, in the course of their acquaintance, gleams of light had visited the mind of Lefevre, and he would express his

conviction that the church could not long retain her present position, but without some radical change, must be destroyed. At the very moment of coming from mass or kneeling before some image, he would grasp the arm of his companion, and exclaim with deep emotion,

"My dear William, God will reform the world, and you will see it."

"Feeble as he was, Lefevre had engaged with his usual enthusiasm in the arduous task of collecting the legends of the saints and martyrs according to their rank in the Romish calendar. He had gone through only two months, when a ray of light from heaven, like that which visited Saul on his way to Damascus, pierced his heart, revealing to him the folly and absurdity of the stories he was trying to rescue from oblivion, when compared with the simplicity and majestic sublimity of the word of God.

Throwing aside those puerile legends, he turned eagerly to the Scriptures, and studied them with all the fervid energy of his soul.

"From the moment," writes D'Aubigné, "that Lefevre, quitting the wondrous tales of the saints, laid his hand on the Bible, a new era appeared in France, and the Reformation was begun."

Commencing with the epistles of Paul, Lefevre soon threw aside his breviary; and as his own heart became warmed and enlightened by the truth, he longed to impart it to others. The doctrine of *justification by faith*, which a few years later rang out in Germany the death-knell of popery, was boldly proclaimed by the aged professor in the halls of the Sorbonne.

"It is God alone," he taught, "who, by his grace through faith, justifies us

unto eternal life. There is a right of works and a right of grace ; one comes from men, the other from God."

Never since the foundation of the university had its vaulted roof echoed to teachings such as these ; and some of his astonished hearers exclaimed :

"What then ? If we are not justified by works, is it not in vain that we perform them ?"

"Certainly not," replied Lefevre ; "good works are never in vain. They are necessary as signs of a living faith, which is accompanied by justification."

Among the students who listened to these words, which contradicted the teaching of four centuries, was one whose soul received them with intense interest and delight. Farel had been brought to feel that he could not save himself by works or penances, and this news of free salvation through a Re-

deemer fell like heavenly music on his ear. His intellect assented to the doctrine, his heart embraced it; and having received the word with joy, he gave up every energy of soul and body to the work of diffusing it throughout the land.

"Thus," says Beza, "was Farel led into the truth—that burning Farel who, undismayed by difficulties, threats, abuse, or imprisonment, won over to Jesus Christ Montbelliard, Neufchatel, Lausanne, Aigle, and Geneva."

The French Reformation was not imported from abroad; it was in every sense of French growth; and William Farel must be regarded as the Luther of France and a part of Switzerland. In some points of character, he resembled the immortal German reformer, though perhaps he lacked the wisdom and sound judgment which marked that great man. For the work given him to do he was

eminently qualified. As a pioneer, preparing the way of the Lord, he stood alone in his age; while to others coming after him was given the honor of organizing and settling the infant churches which he founded.

V.

The Grace of God in the Palace,

Margaret d'Alençon, or Madame de France, was now in the prime of womanhood, brilliant, beautiful, admired, standing nearest the throne in rank and influence, and known throughout Europe as the friend and patroness of learning. The world, with all its wealth and honors, seemed literally at her feet, and wherever she went, the breath of adulation surrounded her like an atmosphere. Indeed, if we were to relate all that is said of this fascinating woman by contemporary writers, we should seem to be writing fiction rather than truth.

"My sister Margaret," said the king

one day to a favorite, "is the only woman I ever knew who has every virtue and every grace, without one mixture of vice; and yet she is never wearisome or insipid, as you good people are apt to be."

Francis, though outwardly a Romanist, was at heart an infidel, and like Gallio, "cared for none of these things." He lived only for pleasure and ambition, and whatever did not minister to one of these was regarded by him with supreme indifference.

How could one like Margaret, living under such influences as those which encircled her, be made to hear the still small voice of the Spirit, "convincing her of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment?" With man it would seem impossible; but God, who leads the blind by paths they know not, was even then preparing a teacher for Margaret, per-

haps the only man in France who could have found a way to the heart of the refined and fastidious princess.

Among the noblemen of the court, one of the most distinguished was William Briçonnet, son of the cardinal of St. Malo, who had entered the church after the death of his wife. Count William, who was studious and fond of retirement, took holy orders, and became bishop of Lodève and Meaux. He was twice sent ambassador to Rome, but returned to Paris, having been proof against the flatteries and seductions of Pope Leo X.

A man like Briçonnet could not fail to be interested in the religious movement going forward not only in the halls of the Sorbonne, but in each of the four colleges of the theological faculty in the city. Farel was then lecturing in one of these colleges, and two friends of his, pupils of Lefevre, the Roussel brothers,

were laboring with enthusiasm in the same cause. Briçonnet, fresh from the splendor and gayeties of Rome, was amazed to find such a work going forward in a city like Paris, and among a people so thoughtless and volatile as the French. He had formerly known Lefevre, and now renewed his acquaintance, listening with the meek submission of a child to the teachings of the venerable professor, in whose room he first met Farel, the two Roussels, and others of similar character, who, like him, were thirsting for the truth.

The illustrious prelate was willing to sit at the feet of the humblest disciple who had been taught of Jesus; but above all things, he longed for a more intimate knowledge of the Saviour himself, that his own heart might reflect His glorious image.

"I am in darkness," he complains,

"awaiting the grace of the Divine benevolence from which I am exiled by my great demerits." Dazzled by the brilliance of this new light, he exclaimed:

"The eyes of men are too weak to receive the whole effulgence of this great luminary."

Lefevre, after his usual custom, sent Briçonnet to the Bible. Having for the first time in his life applied himself to study and understand it, the bishop could talk of nothing but the wonders of the book he had neglected so long.

"Such is the sweetness of this divine food," he says, "that it makes the mind insatiable. The more we taste, the more we long for it. What vessel is able to receive and contain this inexhaustible sweetness? But the dwelling expands according to our desire to entertain this heavenly Guest. Faith is the quartermaster who can alone find room for him,

or, more truly, who makes us to dwell in him."

Through this channel evangelical opinions found their way into the dissolute and frivolous court of Francis I. When he saw such men as Briçonnet not afraid to avow themselves friends of reform in the church, he thought it not beneath him to listen to their arguments. He often met with them in their own circles, invited them to his table, urged them to speak freely, and gave them the appellation of "children." They were men of intellect and vast knowledge, and Francis loved learning, and even went so far as to found Greek and Hebrew professorships for the better understanding of the word of God; thus preparing the way for the diffusion of the Scriptures throughout France. But while Francis paid intellectual homage to the truth—though his heart was untouched

by it, his sister Margaret listened to the bishop with the eager interest of one to whom a new world has been opened. Some of the ladies of her court told her of Lefevre, Farel, and their associates, and of the strange doctrines they were preaching. They procured for the princess the little books then first called "tracts," which the reformers were publishing, and which described the primitive church, the Holy Scriptures, and the liberty which frees men from the yoke of sin, by leading them to trust in Christ alone.

The princess sent for Farel and his friends, held many conversations with them, and was charmed with their piety, humility, and zeal; but it was the bishop of Meaux, her old and tried friend, who became her guide and teacher in the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. Alone in her closet, on her

knees before God, she prayed for divine light as she read the Bible Briçonnet had given her, and found in it all for which she had so long and vainly thirsted. She was weak; here was infinite strength. She was ignorant; here was divine knowledge. She was in darkness; here was the Dayspring from on high waiting to visit her heart, to fill it with heavenly light, and guide her feet into the paths of peace.

In the poems and letters she has left, we have a striking picture of the gradual change wrought in her heart by the entrance of this divine light. As she looked back on her past life, and saw the levity with which she had treated the immoralities of those about her, she exclaims:

"Is there a gulf of ill, so deep and wide,
That can suffice but e'en a tenth to hide
Of my vile sins?"

Until now she had fancied herself purer and better than others; but when her eyes were opened, she saw the corruption of her nature, and exclaims:

"Well do I feel within me, sin the root;
Without are branch and foliage, flower and fruit."

"Still though before thee a poor worm I be,
My God, thou hast come down on earth to me."

It was not long ere the love of God in Christ was shed abroad in her heart, and then her ardent nature pours itself forth in the following quaint lines:

"Word divine, Jesus Salvator,
Only Son of the eternal Pater;
The first, the last, of all things Renovator,
Bishop and King and mighty Triumphator,
By death from death our Liberator;
By faith we 're children of the Creator."

From this time a change, that could not but be visible to all, was wrought in the Duchess d'Alençon, though she was often made to feel that the power of sin was not yet wholly subdued.

"In spirit noble, but in nature slave,
Immortal am I, tending to the grave;
Essence of heaven, and yet of mortal birth,
God's dwelling-place, and yet how little worth!"

An ardent lover of nature, Margaret sought by natural emblems to express the affections and aspirations of her soul.

Brantome says: "She chose for her emblem the marigold, which by its rays and leaves has a seeming affinity with the sun, and turns wherever he goes. She added this device, 'I seek not things below,' as a sign that she directed all her actions, thoughts, desires, and affections to that great Sun which is God; and hence she was accused of having become a Lutheran."

It was impossible that a work of grace like this should take place in the heart of one who was the centre of a gay and dissolute court, without exciting unbounded surprise in the courtiers who thronged the saloons of Francis. They

knew her pride of intellect and conscious superiority, and felt that nothing but earnest conviction could have wrought such a change.

"What!" they exclaimed, "can it be possible that this illustrious princess, who in effect shares the throne of the king—can she stoop to consort with those heretics, whom all men despise?"

Some even went so far as to complain of her to the king, but his answer taught them how little sympathy they had to expect from him where this cherished sister was concerned.

"The duchess loves me too well," was his reply, "to believe any thing contrary to my faith; and even if you were correct, I love her too well to allow her to be troubled on that account."

In an age like that of which we write, when the corruptions of the church of Rome had deluged all the nations of

Europe, producing universal degeneracy, the mind dwells with delight on a character like that of Margaret, though marred by imperfections which none could feel or deplore more deeply than herself. Her convictions of truth were clear and strong, but feminine tenderness often held her back from expressing them even where principle was at stake; and the love for Francis, which was a part of her being, led her to overlook serious errors in him which, if she had been faithful, might perhaps have been avoided.

Placed between her brother and her Saviour, she endeavored to cling to both, and in the effort found herself often in thick darkness, without one ray of light. Still, imperfect as she was, her character was without a parallel in the sixteenth century throughout Europe.

"Every one," says the courtly chron-

icler Brantome, "loved her, for she was kind to all, gracious, charitable, and affable, a great almsgiver, but withal bestowing words and smiles more precious than gold; despising no one, and winning all hearts by her excellent qualities."

But it is as a Christian, as the follower of Christ in the midst of a proud and splendid but profligate court, that she shone like a star, with a radiance that illumines the whole period in which she lived. Many of the nobility were induced by her example to look into the new doctrines and to adopt them, some sincerely and from conviction of the truth, and others simply to please the beautiful Margaret, on whose lips even unwelcome opinions had power to charm.

It was at this time that that the families of Condé, Montgomery, Rochefou-

cauld, La Noué, and others, whose names will live for ever in the annals of reform, first separated from the church of Rome and adopted a new and living faith. Those who yielded only an intellectual assent to the doctrines of the gospel fell back at the first blast of trial and temptation, to return no more; others, too proud to own themselves in error, stood by the reformers, though their hearts were untouched by the truth they sought to defend.

A few there were who, like the Duchess d'Alençon, walked with steadfast feet through the gaping, wondering crowd, succoring the needy, binding up broken and bleeding hearts, and strengthening the hands of those teachers of the reformed faith who were even now beginning to feel the truth of the declaration that "they who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Unhappily, France knew not the day of her visitation, but when the message of salvation was sent to her, turned away from it in unbelief and scorn; and a moral darkness that was to last for ages settled down upon her.

VI.

Trials of the Infant Reformation.

The illustrious conquests made by the Reformation in France, seemed to the eye of man to insure the stability and permanence of the movement. Lefevre, Farel, Briçonnet, and Margaret of Valois were its supporters; some of the highest nobles of the realm had given in their names as adherents of the new faith; and even the gay king himself seemed more attracted by the splendor of the literature attending it than repelled by the severity of its doctrines. Hitherto no open opposition had been made; the tongue of slander was silenced for a time by the blameless deportment of the reformers and their followers.

But this was only a lull before the

storm. There was one woman at the French court whose influence over the king was second only to that of Margaret, and who now wished to expiate the gross immorality of a whole life by her zeal in upholding the interests of the Romish church.

This was Louisa of Savoy, mother of the king and Madame de France, who feared and hated the religion of the Bible in proportion as its purity rebuked the license of her own conduct and that of her court. She was ably seconded in her purpose to destroy the infant reformation by the chancellor of the kingdom, Duprat, a creature of her own, of whom a contemporary historian says, "He was the most vicious of all bipeds."

Madame d'Angoulême and Duprat, working on the ambition of Francis, and ministering to his love of pleasure, obtained so much influence over him, that

he was induced to consent to an interview with Pope Leo X. at Bologna, during which he signed the famous *Concordat.* By virtue of this instrument, the two princes divided the spoils of the church between them, while the king agreed to take the strongest measures to put down heresy in his dominions. While the higher classes listened gladly to the preachers of the truth, the mass of the French people continued faithful to the see of Rome, and the king and people were justly regarded by the pope as an overmatch for Margaret and the nobility. But when he would have inserted a clause declaring that heresy should be hunted out, "no matter where the blow might fall," the king refused to sign such a document, for he well knew at whom it was aimed. His beloved sister Margaret, the ornament of his court and his most trusted friend and counsel-

lor, might be the first to feel the force of such a pledge, and therefore he would never give it.

The Concordat was arranged as he wished; and having signed it, he said to Duprat, as they left the Vatican:

"That paper is enough to destroy us both to all eternity."

Still the love of money and of power urged him forward; and giving over his helpless subjects to the control of the chancellor, he buried himself in dissipation, passing from castle to castle with his favorite courtiers and the ladies of his mother's suite, leading in villages and forests the same sumptuous life that he did in his palace of the Tournelles at Paris, utterly unmindful of the disorders that reigned throughout the capital.

Meantime the university of the Sorbonne, where the good news of salvation was first proclaimed, was stirred

up by a doctor named Beda, of whom Erasmus said, "There are three thousand monks in this one Beda," to condemn Lefevre and his friends for preaching heretical doctrine. But when the accusers appeared before the king to urge the condemnation of these men, he replied:

"No, I will not have these people molested. If we persecute those who teach us, we shall prevent all able scholars from coming into our country."

Doubtless the influence of Margaret might be traced here, as well as in the interference of Francis to protect the venerable professor when he was brought before the ecclesiastical courts on a charge of heresy. Glad to have an opportunity of opposing the pretensions of the Sorbonne and of humbling the monks, the king rescued Lefevre and sternly reproved his adversaries.

But Beda and his party, sustained by Duprat and Madame d'Angoulême, found so many ways of harassing the reformers, that Lefevre, aged, and feeble, and tormented incessantly, longed for repose. Briçonnet, who had retired to his diocese of Meaux, invited him to take shelter under his protection, where Farel, Roussel, and others were already assembled. Thus was Paris forsaken by the preachers of the pure gospel; and by this act that wicked city drew down upon herself the terrible judgments of the Almighty. The horrors of the French Revolution, more than two centuries afterwards were the natural consequences of the spirit of intolerance which drove away the bishop of Meaux and his associates from the capital, and gave back the nation, bound hand and foot, into the power of the Romish priesthood.

Margaret of Valois, deprived of the

friends she most loved and trusted, felt lonely and anxious in the midst of the licentious courts of her mother and her brother. Her own safety depended on the affection of Francis; and she could not but feel that this might at length be overpowered by motives of self-interest or the necessity of satisfying his ally the pope. The Romish ecclesiastics hated Margaret even more than Farel and Lefevre; for they well knew that without her powerful aid the reformers would never have been able to maintain the ground they had gained among the higher classes; and the patronage of one so admired for beauty, wit, and learning gave the new faith an importance which stung them to the soul. In this time of loneliness and sorrow a friend was raised up for her by God, in the person of her aunt, Philiberta of Savoy, who, unlike her sister, Madame d'Angoulême, was a

devoted follower of the meek and lowly Saviour.

Philiberta had been given in marriage by Francis to Julian de Medici, brother of Leo X., soon after signing the *Concordat.* A few years were spent by the young bride in the utmost splendor and gayety, when Julian, who commanded the army of the pope, died suddenly, leaving her at eighteen a childless widow. In the midst of her grief, one of those Waldensian teachers, who from time to time made their appearance among the mountains of Savoy, told her of Jesus, of his love for sinners, his death and resurrection, and his continual intercession before his Father's throne. Such a friend was just what the sorrowing princess needed; and with a heart prepared for the reception of the truth, she visited the court of France, where similarity of tastes soon led to an

intimacy between Philiberta and Margaret. The latter read to her, conversed and prayed with her, and had at length the happiness of hearing from the princess a full confession of her faith in Christ. Still the widow of Julian was too young and inexperienced to take a firm stand for the truth in opposition to her imperious sister, and Margaret often trembled as she thought of her own weakness, standing nearly alone in the midst of open and concealed enemies.

Her husband the Duke d'Alençon had left Paris for the army, her aunt and Christian friend Philiberta was going to Savoy, and the good bishop and his associates were all at Meaux. In her loneliness she writes to Briçonnet:

"Monsieur de Meaux: Knowing that the favor of One alone is necessary, I apply to you, entreating you to supplicate in prayer that God will be pleased

to guide, according to his holy will, M. d'Alençon, who, by command of the king, is setting out as lieutenant-general of his army, which will not, I fear, be disbanded without a war; and thinking that, besides the public weal of the kingdom, you have a living interest in whatsoever concerns his salvation and mine, I pray for your spiritual aid. To-morrow my aunt of Nemours leaves us for Savoy. I am obliged to meddle with many things that cause me much fear; therefore, if you should know that Master Michael could undertake a journey hither, it would be a consolation to me, which I ask only for the honor of God."

Michael of Aranda who is here mentioned, was a member of the evangelical society at Meaux, and a devoted preacher of the gospel.

In one of her letters, Margaret complains of the terror she felt, in view of

the fierce opposition of Duprat, Beda, and the doctors of the Sorbonne. Briçonnet replied in an encouraging tone:

"It is the war which the gentle Jesus tells us in the gospel he came on earth to bring, and also the fire that transforms earthliness into heavenliness. I desire with all my heart to aid you, madame, but from my nothingness expect nothing but the will. Whoso hath faith, hope, and love, hath all he requires, and needs not aid or support. God alone is all in all. This war is fought by love. Jesus demands the gift of the heart. Wretched is the man who goes away from him."

Briçonnet was learning by personal experience what it is to fight for the word of God. The monks and theologians, irritated by the protection afforded by him to the heretical teachers, accused him so loudly, that his brother,

the bishop of St. Malo, came to Paris to look into the matter. Margaret felt deeply for her revered friend, and wrote as follows:

"If in any thing you think that I can assist or comfort you or yours, I pray you to believe that every trouble will turn to my content. May everlasting peace be yours, after these long wars that you are waging for the faith, in which battle you desire to die.

"Wholly your daughter,

"MARGARET."

"I have all the tracts you have sent me," she writes at another time, "of which my aunt of Nemours has a part, and I will forward her the rest; for she is in Savoy at her brother's wedding, which is no slight loss to me, for I have none left like her; wherefore, I beseech you, take pity on my loneliness."

Margaret was soon to be deprived of

this dear relative, on whom she could now look as a sister in one common faith. Philiberta of Nemours died in 1524, at the age of twenty-six. Her death was a severe blow to Madame d'Alençon, who, next to her beloved brother, loved her youthful aunt better than all on earth besides. She wrote to Briçonnet, who replied in the following words:

"MADAME: You tell me to pity you, because you are alone. I do not understand that word. Whoso loves the world supremely is alone; but she whose heart sleeps to the world, and is awake to the gentle Jesus, is alone, for she lives on the one thing needful, and yet not alone, being kept in Him who fills and preserves all things. I cannot and must not pity such loneliness, which is more to be esteemed than the whole world. Abide, therefore, madame, in your only

true Friend, who has been pleased to suffer for us a painful and ignominious passion."

These consoling words fell upon the ear of Margaret without cheering her heart. Every thing around her seemed dark and desolate, and she could see no ray of light.

"As a sheep in a stray country," she writes to Briçonnet, "wandering about, not knowing where to find its pasture through lack of knowing its new shepherds, naturally looks up towards that quarter whence the shepherd once gave her sweet nourishment, so am I constrained to pray for your charity. Come down from the high mountain, and in pity regard among thy benighted people the blindest of all thy fold,

"MARGARET."

In his reply the bishop expresses a hope that the grace of God may touch

the heart of the king and Madame d'Angoulême, so that from them a light might go out to bless and enlighten the nation. Margaret could not share in this hope. She knew too well the worldliness and indifference of Francis, and the intolerance of her mother, and her heart was wrung with anguish as she wrote to the bishop:

"Pity me, reverend sir, for the times are so cold and my heart so icy;" and at the close she signs herself,

"Your hungry, thirsty, and frozen daughter,

"MARGARET."

VII.

The Defeat and Captivity of Francis.

The king of France had scornfully rejected the gospel when it was offered to him, and not only so, but he had lent his name and influence to its enemies; and now, in his turn, he was to find himself forsaken of God in the hour of need. The battle of Pavia, fought on the 24th of February, 1525, between the French and Spanish armies, terminated most disastrously for Francis, whose choicest troops were cut in pieces, his principal officers left dead on the field, and himself taken captive and forced to give up his sword to Lannoy, the viceroy of Naples. The royal captive was detained in Italy for a few months, and then sent

to Madrid, where his case seemed almost hopeless; for, now the emperor Charles had him wholly in his power, he was not likely to give up a rival whom he both feared and hated.

The news of this disaster was a fearful blow to the court and nation; but Margaret, wounded alike in her love and pride, was pierced to the heart by the intelligence. To make her distress still more poignant, her husband the duke d'Alençon behaved shamefully, flying from the field with the rear guard, and leaving the king to his fate. The sensitive and high-spirited princess felt this cowardly desertion even more than the fatal result of the battle; and when her mother was lamenting the fate of Francis, she exclaimed bitterly:

"Madame, if my poor brother has lost all besides, he has at least preserved his honor; but what shall be said of M.

d'Alençon, who, by his shameful treachery, has covered himself and all connected with him with lasting infamy?"

When the duke returned to France, Margaret received him with a coldness which must have made him feel that henceforth all was over between them.

"Monseigneur," she said, in reply to his attempted apologies, "if you had died gloriously on the field of battle, or if you had shared the captivity of your king, I would have mourned for you as brave men should be mourned. Had your unworthy conduct injured only me, still I might have pardoned it; but your desertion of my noble brother in his utmost need I never can or will forgive. It is enough that I must still bear your name, now for the first time disgraced; more than that I will never do. From this hour we meet only as strangers."

The unhappy duke went from Paris

to Lyons, where he died in a few weeks, unable to endure the load of obloquy heaped upon him from every quarter; for all France was in mourning, so great had been the slaughter on the fatal field of Pavia.

In judging of Margaret's conduct on this occasion, we must remember the age in which she lived; and the pride of birth and character which, though modified by her religious principles, was not subdued. She had never loved the husband forced upon her by the king, and now she heard the opinion expressed on every side that, if the duke had done his duty, the result might have been changed, and Francis, instead of Charles, the victor. The glory of her country was tarnished; France left without a monarch, and exposed to the greatest dangers; the brother dearer to her than life, a captive in the hands of his

worst enemy; and her husband a dishonored fugitive—we can hardly wonder that such a complication of evils should at first render her nearly frantic.

But calmer and better thoughts came soon; and while Francis composed himself by repeating, "All is lost save honor," his sister had found consolation in prayer, and replies:

"Save Christ alone, dear brother; he the Son of God still lives and reigns."

It was the hope and belief of Margaret that in this hour of trial her beloved brother might be brought to embrace the faith which she had found so precious. A few months before, on the occasion of the death of his little daughter, the princess Charlotte, the king had manifested strong religious feeling, writing to his sister the following words:

"Dear as she was, I would rather die

than desire to have her back again in this world contrary to the will of God, whose name be ever blessed."

Margaret trusted that the terrible lesson taught him at Pavia might complete the good work in his heart. But, alas, the slight impression made upon that inconstant heart had long since worn away, and Francis was fast settling into that most hopeless of characters, a reckless unbeliever in all forms of faith.

The following touching letter, together with a copy of the Epistles of Paul, was sent by the duchess to the royal prisoner soon after his arrival in Spain. She undoubtedly speaks of herself and Briçonnet in the allegory with which her letter opens:

"DEAR BROTHER: There is a certain very devout hermit, who for these three years past has been constantly urging a person whom I know to pray for the

king, which he has done; and he is assured that—if it pleases the king, by way of devotion, daily to read in his closet the epistles of St. Paul with prayer—he may be delivered from his enemies to the glory of God; for He hath promised in his gospel, that whosoever loveth the truth, '*the truth shall make him free.*' And forasmuch as I think you have them not, I send you mine, begging you to read them; and I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit, which abides in the word, will do for you as great things as he did for those who wrote them, since he is not less good and powerful than he was then, and his promises never deceive. He has humbled you by captivity, but you are not forsaken, as you have hope and courage, and a mind at liberty in spite of the imprisonment of the body.

"Your ever loving

"MARGARET."

A few weeks later she wrote again:

"My dear Lord: The farther you seem removed from us, the stronger are my hopes of your deliverance; for when the reason of man is troubled and fails, then the Lord performs his mighty works. And now, if he makes you partaker of the pains he has borne for you, I beseech you, dear brother, to believe that it is only to try how much you love him, and to teach you how much he loves you; for he will have your whole heart, as he hath through love given you his own. Oh, how blessed will be your brief captivity, if by this means his name may be known and sanctified, not only in your kingdom, but through all Christendom, to the conversion of unbelievers."

The hopes of the princess were destined to meet a cruel disappointment in regard to the conversion of this dearly loved brother, who died as he had lived,

in the arms of the Catholic church. Other sorrows, too, were gathering about the princess. In the absence of the king, his mother, Louisa of Savoy, who acted as regent, wrote a letter to the pope, requesting to know his pleasure concerning the heretics.

The answer soon came, and Madame d'Angoulême and Duprat, whom the pope had made a cardinal, lost no time in attempting to carry out the advice given. Lefevre, who had long been harassed by the doctors of the Sorbonne, was compelled to fly from Meaux under an assumed name, and to take refuge in Strasburg, where he was soon joined by Farel, Roussel, and others who with them had been banished from France. Berguin and Michael d'Arande, chaplain to the princess Margaret, were arrested, and in spite of the entreaties of Margaret, committed to prison ; and last of all,

Briçonnet, the friend of Francis and his sister, one of the most eminent churchmen in France, was impeached, and summoned before the Parliament on a charge of heresy.

It is painful to follow the venerable bishop through this trial, which might have terminated so gloriously for the infant church. Had he been faithful even unto death, France might even then have been saved; but instead of this, he trembled, he wavered, and finally fell back and made a formal recantation of what he called his errors of faith. From this time, though he lived eight years after his apostacy, we hear no more of Briçonnet, whose fall is one of the most remarkable in the whole history of the Reformation. He was doubtless sincere in his advocacy of the truth, and perhaps, like Cranmer, repented before God of his moral cowardice, for it is

certain that to the day of his death the Romish hierarchy did not place confidence in him. Seeking to save his life and honors, he lost them in this world certainly so far as all that makes life valuable is concerned.

That was a time of trial such as Margaret of Valois had never yet known. Her brother was in a foreign prison—her husband in a dishonored grave—her friend and guide had denied the Lord who bought him—and all the teachers of the new faith were either in exile or in prison. The young Queen Claude, though a devout Catholic, was gentle and tolerant, and in her affection the princess could confide without a doubt; but she was a mother, anxious for her little ones in the absence of their father, and a wife, grieving for the misfortunes of a husband who had never loved her; and moreover, her health, never firm,

was now fatally impaired. Margaret well knew that nothing but her personal qualities, her popularity at court, and her influence over the king, saved her from the fate of her proscribed and persecuted friends. In this season of darkness and distress, the princess formed a resolution which marks the singular energy of her character, as well as the strong attachment that bound her to the king.

VIII.

Margaret of Valois in Spain.

Francis I., on his arrival in the Spanish dominions, instead of the honorable treatment he had been led to expect, found himself a close prisoner, constantly attended by a guard, and only permitted to leave his prison for exercise, mounted on a mule and surrounded by soldiers. Exhausted by disappointment, self-reproach, and regret, outraged and betrayed, the spirits of the monarch at length gave way, and he became seriously ill.

It was only by accident, and not until his illness was extreme, that it became known to his family and friends, and the agony of Margaret on hearing the news was intense. Living or dying, she felt

that her place was at his side, and her resolution was instantly formed to proceed in person to Spain, and if he were still living, to endeavor to effect the release of her beloved brother. When this intention was publicly announced it was received with the utmost enthusiasm by all classes. Her great genius, and the reputation she had gained throughout Europe, her fascination of manner, and the love existing between herself and Francis, all marked her as the proper person to attempt this delicate negotiation, and led every one to expect the happiest results.

It was necessary, however, to secure a safe conduct from Charles before trusting so illustrious a victim in his power, and Montmorency was sent to Spain to procure it. But the dangerous illness of the king rendered Margaret so impatient that she set off without it, accom-

panied by a splendid train. Before reaching the Mediterranean she met the marshal bringing from the emperor a safe conduct for three months only. The time was short for all she had to accomplish, but on such an errand she feared nothing, and refused to turn back on that account. By the liberation of Francis she hoped also to effect that of the imprisoned servants of God throughout France, for she could not believe that the king would sanction the enormities perpetrated in his absence by Duprat and her mother. Her own courage may be inferred from the following lines, written at that period:

"Heaven's heights cannot my passage stay,
Nor powers of hell can bar my way;
My Saviour holds the keys of both."

When she reached the shores of the Mediterranean, a violent tempest made it impossible for her to embark. While

waiting for the storm to subside, she wrote her brother on the day of embarkation :

"The bearer will tell you how the heavens, the sea, and the will of man have retarded my departure. But He alone to whom all things pay obedience has given such favorable weather that every difficulty is solved. I will not delay, either on account of my own security or of the sea, which is unsettled at this season, to hasten towards the place where I may see you ; for fear of death, imprisonment, and every sort of evil are now so habitual to me, that I hold lightly my life, health, glory, and honor, thinking by this means to share your fortune, which, if I had my desire, I would bear alone."

Having embarked at Aigues Mortes, the Duchess d'Alençon landed at Barcelona, and went on at once to Madrid,

where she was met by the emperor, who proposed to escort her himself to the residence of her brother. Though well aware that this proposal was dictated by policy rather than kindness, the duchess was obliged to accept it with thanks. A fresh palfrey had been provided for her, and she mounted it at once, and rode through the streets of the city at the right hand of the emperor, who was attended by a brilliant suite. During this interview the tenderness of the woman so completely overpowered the vigor and energy of the diplomat that the astute emperor was deceived in her character. He had given her a favorable account of the health of the invalid, but when she entered his apartment and saw the change wrought in him by the trials he had borne, she threw herself into his arms and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Can this indeed be you, *ma mignonne?*" exclaimed Francis, tenderly caressing her, heedless of the presence of the emperor. "O Margaret, how dear, how inexpressibly welcome is this meeting—destined, perhaps, to be our last."

Margaret was by this time her own bright self again, and wiping away her tears, she replied with energy:

"And wherefore, *mon ami*, should it be so? Believe me, yours is a generous enemy, who will not even seek to resist my tears. He knows you have already suffered deeply in mind and body, and will not urge you further. You will see that my coming is the earnest of good fortune."

"I have already striven against my despair," said Francis, gloomily. "I had even for a time dared to hope; but I have learned much, very much, Mar-

garet, since we parted, and there are some wounds of the heart which will never close."

The interview between the brother and sister was brief and unsatisfactory, for in the presence of Charles they could not speak freely; and the emperor having bade his "good brother," as he termed his royal prisoner, be of good cheer and trust his sincerity, offered to escort the princess to the residence which had been prepared for her, with the assurance that he was ready to accede to such terms of negotiation as might be acceptable to so welcome an ambassadress.

Margaret was not deceived by these fair speeches, for she knew the wily nature of the man with whom she had to deal; and when he had left her, she hastened to take counsel of the eminent statesmen who had accompanied her to Spain. They urged her, if possible, to

form an acquaintance with the widowed queen Eleanora, sister of Charles, whom Francis had offered to marry, and who afterwards became his second wife. Queen Claude had died in the first year of her husband's captivity, and soon after the departure of the princess for Spain, at the age of twenty-five, gladly exchanging the trials of her wedded life for the rest of the grave.

The emperor, fearful of an intimacy between Margaret and Eleanora, sent the latter on a distant pilgrimage, from which she did not return until the duchess had left Spain. The delight felt by Margaret on being once more near her brother may be imagined from the fact that when she heard of his illness, she exclaimed, in the agony of her despair: "Whoever shall announce to me the recovery of the king, that messenger, though he be heated, jaded, and sullied

by the filth of the roads over which he may have travelled, I will embrace and welcome as I would the proudest prince or nobleman of France. Should he have no bed on which to rest, I will give him mine, and sleep upon the boards, to recompense him for the precious tidings he has brought me."

The brother and sister were permitted often to meet; and in the society of his darling Margaret, Francis daily recovered health and strength, though the depression of his spirits was at times so extreme that it amounted almost to despair.

On the fourth of October the princess had her first official audience at court; and her extreme beauty, set off to advantage by the rich dress she wore, the strength of her intellect, her wit and eloquence, and the brave, uncompromising spirit she displayed, made a deep

impression on the emperor. He had delayed the conference, and even sought to avoid it altogether by leaving Madrid for Toledo; but learning this, the princess, receiving from Francis full power to act in his name, resolved to follow Charles to that city, attended only by M. Villiers, grand master of the Knights of Malta.

On her arrival at Toledo, she was received with a cold politeness that might have chilled a less ardent nature, but produced no such effect on Margaret of Valois. When admitted to an audience, she opened the subject in a firm and dignified manner, by demanding the decision at which the emperor had arrived.

"Madame," was the cool reply, "I have already submitted my conditions to the king, your brother."

"And by him, as your majesty well

knows," said the princess, "they were definitely declined. I have now, therefore, only to learn your determination as to those which the king offers to concede."

"They are inadmissible, madame. The hand of my sister, the queen of Portugal, is pledged to the Duke of Bourbou, who alone can release it."

"But I am prepared, sire, to assure your majesty that the Duke of Bourbon will not persist in his claim, now that he knows the views of his sovereign. This difficulty is, therefore, at an end, and we have only to discuss the remaining terms of the treaty."

"I have referred the whole matter to my ministers," Charles replied, sullenly, "and in their hands I am resolved to leave it."

"And is this, sire," she exclaimed indignantly, "indeed to be the result of

all the fair promises you have made my brother and myself, and by which you have sought to beguile us? Are you, in truth, prepared to persevere in a course which must draw down upon you the contempt and abhorrence of all Christendom? Have you forgotten that Francis of France is your sovereign lord, and that you owe him homage for your Flemish provinces? Is a consciousness of your own temporary power to blind you to the fact that by your want of honor and good faith, you are alienating for ever the heart of the noblest sovereign in Europe, and converting him into an implacable enemy? Surely your majesty cannot have considered these things, or you would see that the world will attribute to jealousy and fear so unheard-of a measure as that of detaining in captivity a brother monarch. But should your prisoner, like the caged eagle,

droop and die behind the bars you have forged around him, you would not be safe from the vengeance of his successors, for he has sons whose first and most sacred duty they will regard it to avenge their father's wrongs."

"I have on my side much to complain of at his hands, madame," replied the emperor.

"Name your wrongs, sire, and they shall be redressed. Has he attempted to usurp your territories? Has he met your open hostility with crafty policy and covert wrong?"

"These wranglings are useless, madame," exclaimed Charles, who was galled by the quick wit of the princess. "I have stated my terms, and more I will not concede."

"I am ready, sire, to double the amount demanded for his ransom, as well as to ratify the other conditions proposed by

himself. This is my boundary also, and one that I cannot overpass."

"Then, madame," said Charles, rising, "our conference is ended. The remainder of this unhappy business must be arranged by my ministers, and in their hands I leave it."

The princess attempted to remonstrate, but received for answer only an imperious bow, which left her no alternative but to withdraw. This she did as firmly and haughtily as she had entered the presence; and leaving her counsellors to discuss the question with those of the emperor, returned at once to Madrid, to take leave of the king, as the time mentioned in her safe-conduct had nearly expired.

She was now fully convinced that there was nothing to be expected from the good feeling of Charles, and accordingly resolved, if possible, herself to effect the escape of the royal prisoner.

After revolving a multitude of schemes, at length she decided on one, of which the courage and ingenuity manifested her own indomitable spirit.

Among the few attendants of Francis was a negro, whose duty it was to supply the apartments with fuel. This man, who had a striking resemblance to the king in height and figure, was fixed upon by Madame d'Alençon as her assistant in carrying out her plan; and she succeeded in winning his confidence so entirely, that he declared himself ready to undertake any thing she wished, however great the danger.

It was arranged by Margaret, that so soon as preparation could be made, she should take formal leave of her brother, and that at dusk on the same day the negro should carry in his usual allowance of wood, Francis in the meantime having stained his face and hands with

a deep dye. He was then to exchange clothes with his deliverer, who was to take his bed as if overcome with the parting from his sister; while the captive was to leave the castle and rejoin Madame d'Alençon and her friends, by whom every possible precaution had been taken to insure success.

This promising plan was frustrated almost at the last moment by the treachery of one of the king's French attendants. Having conceived himself insulted by a gentleman of the bed-chamber, he complained loudly to the king, who, absorbed in his own projects, and believing the whole to be a temporary misunderstanding, treated the matter lightly, and dismissed it without inquiry. The enraged valet hastened to Toledo, and in the first burst of passion disclosed to the emperor the plan of escape, giving the names of all connected with it.

Charles treated the thing coolly, expressing his surprise that the king should have degraded himself by such a design; but he gave private orders to the captain of the guard, which rendered it impossible that the attempt should be renewed. The king was watched by night and by day, while he was deprived of the services of his most devoted and faithful servants.

Meanwhile the Duchess d'Alençon, who waited from day to day, hoping for some concession from the emperor, was secretly warned that her safe-conduct would not much longer avail her, and that Charles had determined to arrest her if found in Spain an hour beyond the time specified in the document, as he hoped in this way to obtain better terms from the king. Shocked and indignant, Margaret ordered her escort to make the necessary preparations, and set

forth in the midst of winter, in spite of the unusual severity of the weather. She sent a trusty messenger to the governor of Narbonne, on the frontier, requesting him to meet her at Salces with a body of armed men. Travelling night and day, she reached Roussillon in eight days, though the journey usually took twice that time; and riding into the town at nightfall on the very day on which her safe-conduct expired, she saw the Spanish troops, who had for some days followed her at a distance, turn sullenly away, unable to compete for the prize with the body of soldiers by whom she was surrounded.

IX.

Margaret, Queen of Navarre.

The Duchess d'Alençon left Spain in December, and one month afterwards Francis, who despaired of obtaining his liberty in any other way, signed a treaty by which he pledged himself to agree to all the hard conditions imposed by the emperor. By the terms of the treaty, the king was to marry Eleanor of Portugal, while his sister Margaret was to give her hand to Charles Duke of Bourbon, who, for real or fancied grievances, had renounced his allegiance to Francis, and taken up arms against his country in the service of the emperor. Some of the finest provinces of France were ceded to the Spanish crown, and the two eldest sons of the king were to be given up as

hostages for the fulfilment of the treaty. Before subscribing to these humiliating conditions, the king called his friends together and declared to them that, as he was forced under restraint to sign this document, he regarded it as null and void, and should never fulfil its conditions.

In February, 1527, he left Spain, and on reaching the frontier, had only time to embrace his sons, who were given up to the guards by whom he was accompanied; then taking horse, he rode rapidly to Bayonne, where his mother and sister were awaiting his arrival. The joy of Margaret, though intense, was modified by the thought of her two helpless nephews now in the hands of their father's enemy, and by the enfeebled health of the king, whose once powerful frame betrayed the fearful inroads which captivity and disease had made upon it.

A few months after the return of Francis, Cardinal Wolsey came as ambassador from Henry VIII. of England, to demand the hand of Margaret of Valois for that monarch, who had resolved on divorcing his blameless wife, Katharine of Aragon. When this project was announced to him, the cheek of Francis flushed, and his brow grew dark.

"Your eminence is not, perhaps, aware," he replied, "that the hand of Madame d'Alençon is promised to the Duke de Bourbon."

"Yes, but your majesty cannot possibly contemplate such an alliance," persisted the cardinal. "The king of France would assuredly never bestow his sister in marriage upon a traitor."

"I have in truth no such intention," was the cold reply. "Nevertheless, until the engagement shall have been dissolved she is no longer free. Where

there exists a previous and still unbroken tie, no new bond can be valid."

The cardinal bit his lip. "The duchess herself may refuse to ratify a pledge given without her sanction," he said cautiously.

"Her refusal will in that case suffice," replied Francis, "for I will never consent to sacrifice her happiness to any consideration of state policy. All I can do, therefore, monseigneur, is to refer you to the Duchess d'Alençon herself. Let her decide."

"I can ask no more," said the haughty cardinal, with a bow and smile. "The crown of England and the hand of its young and chivalrous monarch can scarcely be rejected by one of the proud blood of Valois."

But the cardinal was premature in his boast, for when the alliance was proposed to Margaret, it was rejected by her with the utmost disdain.

"Katharine of Aragon, your injured queen," she said to Wolsey, "was the friend of my dear and gentle sister Queen Claude, and for her sake, if for no other, I should spurn your proposal. But not for worlds would I be accessory to an act of injustice like that which you contemplate; and certainly I could never trust my happiness in the hands of a man who is stained with such a crime."

In vain the cardinal declared to her that the delicacy of his sovereign's conscience alone induced him to consent to the divorce. Margaret's lip curled as she replied:

"When conscience has slept so long, it would seem desirable that it should never have awakened, since the breaking of a fond and faithful heart is the result."

Evidently there was nothing to be

made of the Duchess d'Alençon, and Francis was congratulating himself on having escaped by her means from the dilemma in which he was placed, when the cardinal suggested that, instead of his sister's hand, he might bestow that of the young princess Rénée, sister of the deceased queen, upon Henry. Thus urged, Francis returned an instant and decided refusal to this proposition, for such an alliance would weaken if not destroy his claim on the rich province of Brittany which in right of her mother appertained to Rénée. Baffled and indignant, the cardinal returned to England, only to find that Henry had resolved on espousing Anne Boleyn, and was therefore indifferent to the failure of his ambassador in securing the hand of a French princess.

The same year that brought back her brother from Spain was destined to wit-

ness a still more important change in the condition of the Duchess d'Alençon. The young king of Navarre, Henry d'Albret II., ventured to make proposals for the hand of the fascinating princess, and to the surprise of all the court they were accepted by the monarch. Probably Francis hoped by this alliance to retain not only his personal influence over Margaret, but also her presence in his dominions, as King Henry held all his possessions excepting Béarn as fiefs of the French empire, for which he did homage to the king. Margaret herself seems hardly to have been consulted, though such was her devotion to her brother that, except in matters of faith, she never opposed or questioned his will.

The king of Navarre was young and of fine personal appearance; his bravery was undoubted; and he admired Margaret with all the strength of his nature.

But he was at times moody, irritable, and jealous, and, like the Duke d'Alençon, incapable of appreciating the shining qualities of his bride. Still, Margaret was far from feeling toward him the aversion she had experienced for the duke, and in time, as her influence moulded in some degree his character, she became content if not happy.

The first two years of her wedded life were spent chiefly in France, as the declining health of Madame d'Angoulême rendered it impossible for her daughter to leave her permanently. Henry d'Albret was at that time a devoted Romanist, and there was only one subject on which the two young sovereigns were cordially united; this was, the amelioration of the condition of their people; and in this they were so successful, notwithstanding their long absence from Navarre, that "the good

queen" Margaret became the idol of the people.

At this period, though deprived of the friends and teachers whom she trusted, the queen of Navarre received comfort and encouragement from an unexpected source.

Count Sigismund of Haute France, a nobleman of Strasburg, had heard the truth from Luther, and receiving it into a good and honest heart, resolved to live henceforth in accordance with the will of God. Educated with more care than most of the noblemen of that period, he spoke the French language fluently, and as he was a personal friend of Margaret, conceived the idea of introducing through her the gospel into France. Accordingly, whenever he obtained a new work from Luther, he had it translated and forwarded at once to the queen of Navarre. He also wrote the German

reformer, begging him, in the multitude of his labors, to send a letter of friendship and sympathy to Margaret, whose influence in France was of so much importance to the good cause. In truth, the queen greatly needed such encouragement. Since the return of her brother from Spain, he had given himself up to luxury and dissipation, leaving to his ministers the care of public affairs. Persecution was rife in city and country; and he who preached the gospel in its purity did so at the hazard of his life.

Pierre Toussaint, a prebendary of Metz, and one of Margaret's favorite preachers, was an active laborer in the vineyard of the Lord after his brethren had been driven into exile. On one occasion, when Toussaint chanced to pass through the diocese of the abbot of St. Antoine, the merciless priest seized the young evangelist, and in spite of the

excellence of his character and his broken health, immured him in a frightful dungeon, full of filth and stagnant water. In this den, hardly high enough to enable him to stand upright, with his back against the wall and his feet on the only spot free from water, Toussaint spent the weary days and nights of imprisonment, half starved, and stifled by the poisonous vapor that filled the dungeon. What a contrast between this cell and his own cheerful home in Metz, or the magnificent palace of the cardinal of Lorraine, where he had been treated as a son before he became a heretic.

The friends of Toussaint, learning his dreadful condition, lost no time in making it known to their illustrious patroness, who immediately went from Fontainebleau, where she was residing with her mother, to Paris, and throwing herself at the feet of her brother, besought him

with tears to save this innocent victim of priestly tyranny.

"I know nothing about it, *mignonne*," the king replied, "and leave these things to the church; but if he were ten times a heretic, I cannot have you disturbed about it. Take your own course, rescue this lamb of yours from the wolves, but remember that where heresy is concerned there is a limit even to my power of serving and pleasing you. In aught else you may always command me."

When Toussaint came out of his prison, he was wasted almost to a shadow, and so weak that his tottering limbs could hardly support him. He looked around him in vain for friends. No one dared to own a heretic who had so narrowly escaped the scaffold. In this emergency he went boldly to Paris, sought out the queen of Navarre, and found an asylum with her.

The beautiful young queen was surrounded with noble and distinguished personages, all eager to pay court to one who, in reality, shared the diadem with the king.

"Side by side with princes and ambassadors dressed in the most costly garments, and soldiers in their glittering uniform, were cardinals robed in scarlet and ermine, bishops with their satin copes, ecclesiastics of every order with long gowns and tonsured heads." These churchmen, desirous of winning the favor of Margaret, spoke to her of the gospel and the necessity of reform, of the movement in Germany, and its commencement in France.

When Toussaint first heard this kind of discourse, he listened with wonder and hope, believing it the dawn of a better day. But he learned too soon that this religious prattle meant noth-

ing, and was only intended to deceive the princess. He wrote to Lefevre and Roussel, entreating them to assist him in unmasking the hypocrites, and in preaching the truth to a giddy and corrupt court. In return, they exhorted him to be patient, lest by premature action he should ruin every thing.

"Yes," he replied, weeping as he wrote, "be wise after your fashion—wait, put off, dissemble; you will have to acknowledge at last that there is no such thing as preaching the gospel without bearing the cross. The banner of divine mercy is now raised, the gate stands wide open, God calls us. He does not mean us to receive his summons with supineness. We must hasten, lest the opportunity escape us, and the door be shut."

Toussaint was stifled in the atmosphere of the court. The air seemed to

him closer and more oppressive even than that of his den at St. Antoine's; and though Margaret was kindness itself, he found it impossible to remain in Paris. Turning his back therefore on the magnificent offers made to him if he would connect himself with the "progressive" wing of the Romish church, Toussaint quitted France, with a fervent prayer that, in the struggle which he saw approaching, his beloved country might be found on the side of the truth.

X.

A New Life at Fontainebleau.

On the 7th of January, 1529, Margaret of Navarre became a mother; and the new life thus given her of God proved to be one of more importance to his infant church even than that from which it sprung. Jeanne d'Albret, afterwards the unfortunate but illustrious queen of Navarre, was born in the old palace of Fontainebleau, where her mother was residing in retirement with Madame d'Angoulême, while her husband was absent transacting important business for his brother-in-law the king. For months the health of Margaret had occasioned serious alarm to her royal relatives. A constant cough had harassed

her day and night, and for the first time in her life her spirits were so much depressed that her health was impaired by it.

There were many reasons for the depression of the queen. She was unavoidably separated from her brother at a time when more than ever he needed her restraining and guiding influence, surrounded as he was by treacherous and interested courtiers, and exposed to the seductions of his unprincipled mistress, the Duchess d'Etampes, in whose hands the king was as wax, to take any impression she chose. Public affairs were all going wrong, and her two young nephews, the dauphin and the Duke of Orleans, were still detained by the emperor in close captivity.

All these causes of anxiety preyed upon the queen, and the friends who would have exhorted her to have trust

and confidence in God were far away, forbidden to approach their native land.

A few days before the expected event she wrote thus to her brother:

"I assure you, monseigneur, that the fear I feel at the result of my approaching trial, which I dread as much as for many reasons I earnestly desire it, is almost converted into confidence and hope, seeing my sorrow so affects you that to relieve it you would even sacrifice the health so dear to me, and in comparison with which I esteem my health as nothing. Believe me, I cannot endure pain so great as that which would befall me should any harm happen to you. I trust God will permit me to see you before my hour arrives; but if this happiness is not to be mine, I will cause your letter to be read to me, since, being written by your hand, it cannot fail to inspire me with courage.

I shall to the last eagerly expect your much-desired arrival."

Margaret's fond wish was not destined to be gratified. The pressure of public affairs rendered it impossible for the king to leave Paris; but he sent his two principal physicians to remain with his sister till she was convalescent, though his own failing health required their constant attendance.

After the birth of the princess Jeanne a courier was at once despatched with the intelligence to Francis, by whom it was received with a transport of joy, for his anxiety had been excessive. He wrote a long letter of congratulation to Margaret, assuring her that his infant niece should hold the same place in his affection and care as his own daughters, Madelaine and Margaret de France; a promise which he afterwards faithfully kept.

The king of Navarre was staying at Bourges at the time of his daughter's birth, when he was informed by a missive from Madame d'Angoulême of the event and of the safety of the queen. Never was intelligence received with more thankful pleasure, for the state of Margaret's health had given him the greatest solicitude for many months. He presented the messenger with a magnificent diamond ring, assuring him that such news would be cheaply purchased by the loss of half his possessions.

Margaret's faithful friend, Aymée de la Fayette, baillive de Caen, was appointed governess to the infant princess. At a very early period of her existence Jeanne manifested symptoms of the energy and firmness for which she was in in after-life so celebrated, and the royal mother, during her own convalescence,

was cheered by daily reports of the vigorous health and beauty of the little princess. When nine days old, Jeanne, contrary to the wish of her mother, was privately christened in the chapel of the Holy Trinity, at Fontainebleau. Her sponsors were King Francis, the Duchess d'Angoulême, and, on the part of the king of Navarre, Madame Isabel d'Albret, Henry's favorite sister.

Margaret was compelled to sacrifice her own private wishes in thus committing her babe to the spiritual care of the Romish church; but in this, as in every thing else, the will of Francis was all-powerful, and she could only pray in secret that her own watchful care and the instruction she could give, might avail to counteract the influence of the step then taken. The prayer was heard and answered. When the babe was a

month old she was committed to the sole charge of Madame de la Fayette, who departed from Fontainebleau to Louray, a castle near the town of Alençon, and the usual residence of the bailive, when not in attendance on her royal mistress. The constitution of the little Jeanne was strong and healthy, and her temperament one of unusual vigor and activity. Her courage surprised every one; and her frolicsome disposition kept her governess in a perpetual state of excitement.

In accordance with the wise injunctions of Margaret, none of the vexatious restrictions which then surrounded children of royal parentage were suffered to depress the joyous spirits of the little Jeanne. Her childhood was spent in happy companionship with the children of her governess, and she never dreamed of claiming any preëminence over her

young playfellows, only as it was the natural result of the superior force of character and energy of purpose for which she was even then distinguished. Living at a distance from the court, she suffered no injury from the homage which would there have attended the daughter of the brilliant Margaret, child as she was; while her principles were carefully guarded from the shock of early acquaintance with the profligacy of the courtiers.

It was the daily delight of the princely child to sit at the feet of her governess and listen to the stories which she loved to tell her of her royal mother, of her loveliness, her goodness, and the ardent affection felt for the queen by all who knew her. She told her of Margaret's kindness to the poor and suffering, of the protection afforded by her to the persecuted reformers, and of her visit

to Spain to procure the release of the king from captivity. As the child listened, her bosom would swell, her large dark eyes glisten with unshed tears, until, starting up, she would exclaim:

"Do, dear madame, help me to become worthy of such a mother. I cannot hope to be like her, but never, never shall she have cause to blush for her child."

From infancy veneration for her mother became a leading trait in Jeanne's character, and influenced the most important events of her future life.

But the happiest seasons ever known by the little Jeanne were those in which the queen of Navarre, quitting the court, took up her abode in the castle of Alençon, to be near her child. As she saw her approaching, Jeanne would bound into the arms of her beautiful and gifted mother, and exclaim in the intensity of

delight: "I am so happy, I think I could die."

Hand in hand, the mother and child wandered through the charming grounds of Louray; while Margaret, forgetting the world and its cares, was herself once more a child in the garden of Amboise, describing to her daughter those bygone scenes so vividly that they seemed actually passing before her. From her mother, Jeanne imbibed that ardent affection for her royal uncle, which enabled her afterwards to submit without a murmur to his will, even when it crossed the most cherished purposes of her life.

While the princess was still in early childhood, she had the happiness of embracing an infant brother, who, like herself, was placed under the guardianship of the baillive of Caen. The child seemed at first healthy and promising; but

to the grief of his parents, he died at the age of five months, at the castle of Alençon, in the arms of Queen Margaret. By this sad event the princess became once more the heiress presumptive of Navarre and Béarn, though it would have been well for her future peace had this fair heritage passed away from her in her happy infancy.

Jeanne d'Albret resided at Louray until she had completed her fifth year, and during that time she made frequent visits to her uncle at St. Germain's, where the court was then residing. Francis, who dearly loved the beautiful and spirited child, loaded her with caresses, and so petted and indulged her that, but for the nobleness of her disposition, she must have been spoiled.

Her father, too, was both fond and proud of his gifted child, and was never weary of watching her infantine sports.

But it was the sad fate of Henry to find in his brother-in-law a rival in the affections of those nearest and dearest to him; for the little Jeanne, won by the kindness of her royal uncle, loved him passionately, and a burst of tears testified her displeasure when her little arms were unclasped from his neck, and she was compelled to leave his presence. The child, thus made the pet and plaything of her father and uncle, was distinguished at court by the name of "*la mignonne des rois*," "the darling of kings;" and the highest nobles of the kingdom requested as a special favor that their daughters might be selected as companions for the young princess.

After the death of the Duchess d'Angoulême, which took place in 1532, Margaret and her husband resolved to leave France for a time, in order to reside in their own dominions at Pau.

Henry's frequent residence at St. Germain's was a necessity which, though imposed upon him by his marriage, he found intolerably irksome. His self-love was wounded by a sense of dependence on the will of another, while he felt that his royal rank hardly gave him precedence over the proud and wealthy aristocracy of France. In Navarre he was a king; in Paris he was only one amid a crowd of courtiers.

Besides this there was another fruitful source of annoyance to the king of Navarre. Francis, jealous of any other control than his own over his beloved sister, resented deeply every attempt on the part of Henry to exercise any kind of conjugal influence over her actions. While she dwelt in the royal halls of the Valois, the king would not permit "*la Marguerite des Marguerites*"—"the pearl of pearls"—to acknowledge any

other will than his own; and in carrying out this decision, his encroachments on the rights of Henry as a husband and a king were frequent and vexatious.

Placed thus between the two, the situation of Margaret was embarrassing; but her sweetness of disposition and exquisite tact enabled her to preserve the love and confidence of both husband and brother. Still she was weary of the struggle, and gave a cordial assent to her husband's proposition of paying a visit to their dominions, though the permission of Francis was only obtained after long and repeated entreaties on her part. As the queen intended to remain for many months in Béarn, she naturally wished to take with her the princess Jeanne, that she might present her to her future subjects. This request was met by the king with a refusal so decided that Margaret gave up the point,

sacrificing maternal feeling to the sisterly affection which had been through life her ruling passion. But it was not simply devotion to his will that actuated her in accepting his decision. She was well aware of the advantages which must follow this virtual adoption of the young princess by the king, and felt that her education would advance more rapidly in France than in her own court of Béarn.

But if Margaret acquiesced in the decision of Francis, her husband was far from doing the same. He was certain that the motive which prompted the king in this arbitrary act of separating an only child from her parents was distrust of his fidelity to the interests of France. The king feared lest Henry might enter into negotiations with the emperor Charles, who claimed and held Lower Navarre, in order that by the union of

Jeanne with Prince Philip of Spain, all this rich heritage of Béarn, Upper and Lower Navarre, with the principalities belonging to them, might fall to the Spanish crown.

To such a step, Francis would sooner die than give his consent; and to avert all danger, he resolved to retain the princess in his own dominions until he could bestow her hand on some one of his own selection. In order to soften the harshness of this decision, the king informed Henry that he intended to bestow the princess in marriage on his second son, Henry of Orleans, who afterwards married the infamous Catharine de Medicis. This proposal was acceptable to both parents, and the royal relatives parted in kindness, though the heart of the little Jeanne was almost broken by the enforced separation from her idolized mother.

XI.

The Palace Home.

With a heart which grew lighter at every step as she entered her husband's hereditary dominions, Margaret of Valois at length reached Béarn, and took up her abode in the castle of Pau. It was an immense, but irregular pile, which had been long deserted; and though the state apartments were in tolerable preservation, many portions of the castle showed plainly that the hand of time had been busy with their adornings. The first care of the sovereigns was, to enlarge and embellish this royal abode, fitting it up in a manner worthy of its past history and of the fair queen whose residence it had now become. Around it

they laid out magnificent gardens, in which, following her own good taste rather than the fashion of the time, Margaret suffered the wildness of nature to appear side by side with the perfection of art.

The mountainous principality of Béarn, stretching along the northern side of the Pyrenees, contains some of the most fertile and picturesque scenery that Europe can boast. The mountains dividing France from Spain form a gigantic bulwark, by which nature has marked the boundary of each land ; and though this immense chain is broken only by narrow and difficult passes, yet the ridges which it sends off like buttresses into the plain country are intersected by wide and beautiful valleys, rich with all the gifts of summer, and glowing with the loveliness of perpetual fertility.

The castle of Pau was situated on

rising ground above the river Gave, and overlooked the splendid scenery around on every side. The broad valley of the Gave, with its rich carpet of verdure, the river dashing in liquid diamonds over rocks and miniature precipices; the dark shadows of the pine forests that clothed each giant hill, and in the background, the long, wavy outline of the purple mountains, with here and there an icy peak lifting its glittering head—all this was spread out before the eye from the castle terrace, offering in one grand view a thousand forms of beauty.

The most skilful artisans and agriculturists of France were invited by Margaret to Béarn, that the Bearnois, who were a hardy and faithful, though ignorant people, might learn the true value of the soil on which they labored. She went herself among the peasantry, heard

their simple stories of want and oppression, gave them such counsel as they needed, and with her own hands often ministered to their necessities.

Nor was this all. The true spiritual life of Margaret may be said to have commenced at Béarn. Hitherto her stature as a Christian had been dwarfed by her position at the French court; and above all, by her unquestioning devotion to the will of the king. Now she stood alone; for though Henry loved her too well to oppose her in any thing, he was still a member of the Romish church, and would give her no assistance in the work of reform. But Margaret of Valois was of a nature to be stimulated rather than discouraged by seeming obstacles. Such of the reformed clergy as could be reached by her were cordially welcomed to her territories; and Gerard Roussel was made bishop

of Oléron, while the aged Lefevre was taken to her palace home, and treated with the respect and reverence due to a father.

Not content with the steps thus taken, the queen caused the Latin prayers of the church to be translated into French; and when the work was finished, she sent copies to Francis, and distributed them among the courtiers, who received them gladly. But when the doctors of the Sorbonne heard of this daring innovation, they condemned it at once as heretical, prohibiting the sale or use of the book by a decree of the Parliament. Margaret also published a poem entitled, "The Mirror of a Sinful Soul," which was immediately condemned by the Sorbonne, and the copies saved from burning only by the express command of the king, who was always on the alert to ward off persecution from his beloved

sister. Some of the fanatical students were so enraged by the poem that they got up a "mystery," as dramatic entertainments of a certain kind were then called, in which the queen of Navarre was made to figure as a fury from hell. Justly indignant at this insolence, Francis sent his archer guard to arrest the culprits, and but for the intercession of Margaret in their behalf, it would have been long ere they obtained a pardon.

In her little kingdom of Béarn, the queen found a soil in which the good seed of the word took deep root, and sprang up, bearing fruit abundantly. The simple and honest hearts of the peasantry opened to receive the truth as the thirsty earth drinks in the rain of heaven; and among the nobility of that province there were few who did not yield either to the fascinations of Margaret or the eloquence of her preach-

ers, though Upper Navarre, Foix, Bigorre, and the other counties comprised in her kingdom were still under the spiritual domination of the Romish see.

But while Margaret lent all the weight of her example and her influence to advance the cause of reform, she was not insensible to the claims of art and literature. Her court, held at Pau and Nérac, rivalled that of Francis in wit and learning, if not in splendor. The most beautiful and intellectual women of the age gathered about her, as well as the noblest and most gifted men. In her saloons one found all the aristocracy of talent, all the nobility of intellect. Scholars, poets, musicians, and painters were her courtiers, and most graciously and royally she repaid their homage.

Her *valets de chambre* were such men as Clement Marot, Des Periers, Antoine du Moulin, and Jean de la Haye—schol-

ars who won for her saloons the title of the "New Parnassus," a name they well deserved, where every art and science had its altar and its votary.

Thus far Margaret had gone forward in her plans of usefulness and benevolence with the passive acquiescence, if not the coöperation, of her husband. But she was now to feel once more the instability of all earthly enjoyment. Henry d'Albret, who had for some time manifested a growing dislike to the doctrines and the persons of the reformed preachers, now became furiously angry, and reproached his wife in such insulting terms, that she was compelled to appeal to the authority and support of her brother. It is said that he even forgot his manhood and the dignity of his station so far as to raise his hand against the unoffending queen, and that the actual presence of the French king

was necessary to protect her from further violence.

If this were so, no symptoms of an unforgiving disposition on her part were visible now, for she refused to leave him, though urged to do so by her brother, and would not suffer Francis to depart without a full and free forgiveness of her offending husband.

This magnanimous conduct produced a powerful effect on the heart of the king of Navarre. He began for the first time to feel an interest in the opinions of his wife; and ere long was induced to take part in her religious exercises—to read the gospels, to assist in the psalms, to listen to the sermons of the preachers, and even to receive the sacrament, administered privately in one of the vaults of the castle. The conversion of the king, even if superficial, was of service to Margaret, by enabling her to pursue

her beneficent career without hinderance; and during the remainder of her life she never again had occasion to complain of the neglect or cruelty of her husband.

Such a change as that wrought in the king of Navarre could not be expected to escape the prying eyes of the Romish priesthood, and the cardinals of Armagnac and Grammont hastened to Paris to inform Francis of the state of things in Béarn. The king would gladly have dismissed the complaint, but he dared not thus brave the power of the church, and was compelled to summon Margaret to his presence, that she might, if possible, justify her course.

Margaret instantly obeyed the summons, and proceeded to Paris, where she was received coldly and even sternly by the king; but she knew her influence over him too well to lose her courage

even in such an emergency. She replied to his accusations with such admirable tact and self-possession, that at the close of the interview he declared his full belief in her innocence, and refused even to listen to the arguments of her enemies. Had she been less beloved, her peril would have been great; for, from the pope down to the mendicant monk, there was not one of the Romish clergy by whom she was not dreaded and hated as the great patroness of heresy.

Warned by her narrow escape, the queen from that time avoided all discussion with the Catholic priesthood, and even went so far as to endow hospitals, found orphan-asylums, and give largely to the poor, under the auspices of the priests. Farther than this she never went. She still maintained a constant correspondence with Calvin and Farel, and assisted Marot in his translation of

the Psalms, quietly encouraging the work of reform wherever it was possible to do so, and by her letters to Erasmus and other celebrated scholars, undermining the power of the papacy just so far as her influence extended.

The next visit of Margaret to the court of her brother was made on the occasion of his marriage to Eleanora of Portugal, sister of the Emperor Charles. The dauphin and his brother, who had been retained in Spain since the release of Francis, were ransomed at two millions of golden crowns, and accompanied the royal bride to her new home. She was met by Francis at a convent near Mont Marsan, and having been briefly and coldly welcomed by him, was requested to prepare for the marriage ceremony, which took place before dawn on the following morning, with a haste and careless disregard of ceremony strangely

at variance with the habits of the monarch or his court.

The coronation of the queen took place on the 5th of March at St. Denis, and her public entry into Paris followed on the 15th, at which time she first received the honors due to her rank.

At the palace of the Tournelles she met for the first time her new sister the queen of Navarre, and amid all the splendor with which she was surrounded, turned at once to her as the one friend on whom she might implicitly rely. Queen of one of the first kingdoms of Europe, and the bride of a magnificent sovereign, Eleanora seemed raised to the summit of earthly prosperity; but she was far from happy, and her melancholy was visible to all. She had been deeply wounded by the coldness of her reception in France, so different from that demanded by the chivalric spirit of

the age; but though stung by the indignities to which she had been subjected, she had felt no surprise. During his residence at Madrid Francis had treated her with marked coldness, and she well knew that her hand had been forced upon her reluctant bridegroom by his triumphant rival. Even now, in the first days of their union, his indifference was so marked, that she seemed desolate and alone in the midst of a crowd. Still her Spanish pride sustained her; and if at times unbidden tears would start, she forced them back, assuming a composure she was far from feeling.

At her first official reception, she was seated in the centre of the dais or raised platform, having her new friend and sister Margaret of Valois on her right hand, with whom from time to time she exchanged a bright smile or a kind word while the presentations were going for-

ward. The king, by whom she should have been supported, was at a distance, engaged in an animated conversation with his mistress the Duchess d'Etampes, who, in a splendid brocade sparkling with jewels, was standing near a window, casting at intervals a curious and contemptuous glance upon her new sovereign.

At length her turn came, and as her name was announced by the mistress of the household, she advanced to the throne with the step and manner of an empress. But Eleanora understood her position, and indignant at an audacity she had not expected even from her, instead of presenting her hand when the proud duchess knelt before her, she turned aside her head, and entering into conversation with the queen of Navarre, left Madame d'Etampes to retire at her leisure.

For a moment she was embarrassed at such a position; but pride came to her assistance, and as she rose slowly from her knee, she murmured in tones that reached the ear of the queen:

"Ha! is it even so? You disdain to give me your hand. It is then to be a trial of strength between us, and I accept the challenge. Your husband shall avenge me."

In the society of Margaret when she visited the court, and that of her young stepsons, to whom she had become attached in Spain, Eleanora found her only comfort; and withdrawing herself gradually from the gayety of the court, sought consolation, as her predecessor Claude had done, in works of benevolence and piety. Often, as she sat at her open casement, she watched with swimming eyes the gorgeous litter of the proud favorite, with its draperies of pale

blue velvet and its train of pages, issuing from the palace gates with more than regal pomp; but not even to Margaret did she ever complain of the husband for whose sake she had left her native country, only to meet at his hands indifference and neglect.

XII.

The Young Princess of Navarre.

When Margaret departed from France, leaving the little Jeanne behind her, she insisted upon one condition only—that the child should not be educated at the court of her uncle. A separate establishment was therefore formed for her, on a scale suited to her own dignity and her position as an adopted daughter of the king.

The place selected for her residence was Plessis-les-Tours, the fortress palace of Louis XI., where, surrounded by bristling defences, hidden pitfalls, and iron cages, the jealous despot shut himself up like a spider in the midst of his web watching for prey. It was a gloomy residence for a child, and not all the

magnificence with which Francis had fitted up and refurnished it, could remove from the sensitive mind of the princess the dismal ideas with which it was connected. She listened eagerly to every fearful legend relating to the past history of the castle, and fancied, when she heard the wind wailing as it swept through the dense forests which encircled it, that the moans of the unhappy victims who had perished there were still echoing from the deep prison-vaults.

Still, the life of Jeanne d'Albret at Plessis was far from being an unhappy or dreamy existence. She loved study, and even in childhood learned every thing with ease and rapidity; and in her hours of exercise and play was as gay and lighthearted as the birds whose morning and evening songs were her delight.

Madame de Silly, baillive of Caen,

was nominated by the king chief lady of honor and governess to the princess. The poet Nicholas de Bourbon received the appointment of preceptor, and taught the princess languages, belles-lettres, and poetry. Francis appointed two chaplains to teach his niece her religious duties and theology, and these were placed under the control of the bishop of Maçon. She had also a certain number of companions of her own age, a tirewoman, a master of the horse, and many other subordinate dependents.

For five years all went on prosperously with Jeanne in her lonely abode at Plessis. She made rapid progress in learning, and the fearless honesty and truthfulness of her character were daily developing. She was morally brave almost to a fault, for she instantly resented all attempts at deception on the part of any one; and the freedom of

her remarks to her royal uncle when he visited her, terrified her governess and preceptor. To her mother Queen Margaret alone the child always testified the respect and submission becoming her age and position, yielding in all things to her will, and declaring that she would sooner die than offend her.

In 1538, the princess was attacked with a violent fever, which so greatly exhausted her strength that the physicians despaired of her recovery. Happily, Queen Margaret was then on a visit to her brother at St. Germain's, and a messenger was sent for her at once by Madame de Silly. Overwhelmed with affliction, the fond mother hastened to Plessis, and on her arrival had the happiness of finding the beloved patient slowly recovering. The joy of the child at seeing her mother once more, brought on a return of the fever; but Margaret

never left her, and her maternal cares were rewarded by the entire recovery of the princess.

The queen remained at Plessis two weeks; and it was a season of such unmixed delight to Jeanne, that she begged her physicians not to pronounce her convalescent, lest it should prove the signal for her mother's departure. In spite, however, of the pleadings of her own heart and the wishes of her child, Margaret was compelled to leave Plessis when the young Jeanne had regained her health, as affairs of state rendered it necessary for her to return to Navarre.

Before leaving she made arrangements for the permanent residence at the castle of Jeanne's paternal aunt, Isabel d'Albret, Viscountess de Rohan, who with her two children came to Plessis in 1539. The affairs of the viscount

were in great disorder, and but for the generous offer of Margaret, the family must have been without a place of shelter. One of the daughters, Françoise de Rohan, was adopted by Margaret, and enjoyed the advantages denied to her own child, of being educated under her immediate supervision.

When Margaret was at the French court, the little Françoise was sent to Plessis to visit her mother and cousin, and while there often sighed to be restored to the gentle guidance of her aunt, and to resume her place among the high-born damsels whom the queen, when at Pau or Nérac, condescended to instruct with her own lips. The temperaments of the cousins were totally unlike, that of Jeanne being marked by rectitude of principle, courage, and energy; while Françoise was timid, yielding, and dependent, willing rather to

give up a point even when right, than to contest and defend it. The same spirit that in after-years made Jeanne d'Albret the most illustrious defender of the faith in Europe, manifested itself in her childhood by a sturdy disregard of etiquette or of consequences, where the interests of truth were concerned. She is even said in some instances to have administered chastisement with her own hand when her young companions exhibited want of courage or self-control. However this may be, the young heiress was greatly beloved, both by her playfellows and instructors, for the nobleness and magnanimity of her disposition and the kindness of her heart.

After the departure of Queen Margaret from Plessis, the princess sank into a state of profound melancholy, from which it was impossible to rouse her. She resented deeply the enforced sepa-

ration from her idolized mother, and no reasoning on the part of her uncle could remove the feeling. She was now nearly twelve, and the native strength of her mind, together with the severe study to which she had been accustomed, had prematurely developed her character. From her soul she venerated justice and consistency, and no exertion of arbitrary power could compel her submission. In vain her preceptor invited and urged her to return to her studies; in vain Madame de Silly reproved her for her repinings, and the impropriety of her course toward the king, whose kind letters she hardly deigned to answer. In reply, she passionately entreated them to procure for her permission to rejoin her parents at Pau, which she longed to do, or else to prevail on Francis to suffer her to reside at the court of France.

"Jeanne d'Albret," says the old his-

torian of Béarn, "the heiress of our Henry and Margaret, was brought up at Plessis, because King Francis feared that her father intended to bestow her on Philip, son of the emperor. This abode proved very wearisome to our princess, so that her chamber often echoed with her plaints, and the air with her sighs, while her tears flowed freely. The lustre of her complexion (for she was one of the fairest princesses of Europe) was marred by the abundance of her tears; her hair floated negligently on her shoulders; and her lips forgot to smile."

In this state of things Francis saw that it was no longer desirable to retain her at Plessis, but he would not restore her to her mother until he had made the plan of Henry impossible, by solemnly affiancing her to some other prince. After long debate and consultation, he

finally fixed upon the Duke of Cleves, a German nobleman, whose sister Anne of Cleves was the fourth wife of Henry VIII. of England, while another sister, Sybilla, had married Frederic, the elector of Saxony. The duke was a follower of Luther, and for this cause more acceptable to Margaret than a prince of higher rank who was a Romanist would have been; and more than all, it was the will of Francis that this alliance should be at once concluded.

It then became necessary to apprize the young princess of the change about to take place in her condition. Accordingly, one day while the court was at Amboise, the king commanded a hunt along the banks of the Loire, and followed only by a few attendants, separated from his train and suddenly appeared before the gates of Plessis-les-Tours. He was received by Jeanne with transports

of joy, for she believed he had come to grant her request, and take her with him to St. Germain's. Instead of this, she was informed that her hand having been promised to the Duke of Cleves, the engagement was to be fulfilled immediately; she was therefore to depart without delay to join her mother, Queen Margaret, at Alençon.

The pale cheek of the princess mantled with the proud blood of her race as she heard this summary disposal of her destiny. Unable at first to control her emotion, she burst into a flood of tears; but soon recovering her self-possession, she approached her uncle, and earnestly "besought him that she might not be be forced to marry M. de Cleves."

Francis could never endure opposition to his will, and coldly answering her that resistance would be of no avail, he turned away from the weeping child, and the

same hour left the castle. Thus deserted, nothing was left for her but obedience to the royal mandate; and drying her tears, she prepared to bid adieu to the home in which so large a portion of her life had been spent, and the friends whose kindness had made it hitherto so happy. At Paris, where she stopped for a few days on her way to Alençon, she was presented by the king to the bridegroom he had selected for her. Duke William of Cleves was a brilliant and fascinating cavalier, and many bright eyes grew brighter at his approach; but child as she was, the young princess felt for him the strongest repugnance, and behaved towards him so haughtily as to incur the severe displeasure of the king. Her cheek glowed and her lip curled with contempt as she witnessed the servility of his deportment to the king and his favorite Montmorency; and when re-

proved by her governess for her coldness of manner, she replied carelessly:

"I cannot look upon it as an advantage to leave France and my own heritage of Béarn and Navarre, to marry a duke of Cleves."

When Jeanne reached Alençon, her royal mother, whose course had been dictated by Francis, questioned her strictly, expostulating with her on her rebellious opposition to his will. Jeanne listened respectfully, and replied calmly:

"It is true, dear madame, that I did take the liberty of speaking frankly to the king, for I have always been in the habit of saying what I thought or wished to him, without reproof or hinderance. Should I do less, when the happiness of my whole life is at stake?"

Margaret was well aware of her brother's want of confidence in the fidelity of his brother-in-law, and anxious to offer

some apology for her daughter, she wrote the following letter to Francis:

"Monseigneur, in my present embarrassment I find one consolation, which is, the knowledge that neither the king of Navarre nor myself have any other desire than to obey you, not only in the matter of this marriage, but in all that you command us.

"Having heard that my daughter, not properly appreciating the honor of your visit, nor the obedience she owes to you, nor that a maiden of her years should have no will of her own, was bold enough to utter the request that the marriage might not take place, I know not what to say, and am overwhelmed with grief for the same. Whence this contumacy on her part arose, I know not, for she has not mentioned such a design to me, by word or letter. If I could discover the person who has inspired her with

the absurd idea of resisting your will, I would make such a demonstration of my displeasure as would convince you, monseigneur, that in this affair the foolish child has acted without the sanction or approval of her parents.

"Knowing, therefore, that it is your custom more to pardon errors than to punish them, especially when, as in the case of my poor daughter, the understanding rather than the heart is in fault, I entreat you humbly, that as this is her first fault towards yourself, you will not withdraw from her that paternal favor you have ever manifested to her."

For the first time Jeanne was deaf to the entreaties and arguments of her beloved mother. She declared vehemently that she should die if this detestable project was persisted in, and that she preferred death to such an alliance. Meanwhile, the messenger sent by Mar-

garet to France with her letter to Francis, returned, bringing a positive command that the betrothal should take place at once; and that the princess and her mother should then proceed to Chatellerault that the marriage might be immediately solemnized. Finding that resistance would avail nothing, this girl of twelve adopted the singular expedient of drawing up a formal protest against her compulsory marriage, obtaining the signatures of three officers of her household to witness the document.

The ceremony of betrothal took place in the great hall of the castle of Alençon, the bishop of Seéz officiating. Though evidently annoyed and distressed, the princess was calm, and without a murmur prepared to accompany her mother to Chatellerault, where the marriage was to take place. Before leaving Alen-

çon, however, she drew up a second memorial, which was signed by the same persons who witnessed the first protest. These documents were afterwards of great importance to her.

Jeanne was received by her uncle with entire cordiality on her arrival at Chatellerault, where the most sumptuous preparations for the nuptials were in progress. The marriage ceremony was performed on the 15th of July, 1540. The youthful bride was dressed in a robe of cloth of gold covered with jewels of immense value. A ducal coronet, set with the richest gems, encircled her brow, and the train of her velvet mantle was bordered with ermine. The profusion and display on this occasion were so great, that the coronation of Charles V. cost less than this royal pageant, in which Jeanne bore so reluctant a part.

Resolute to the last, the young princess, when her uncle presented himself to lead her to the altar, half rose from her chair, then resuming it, declared herself unable to walk, from the weight of the gold and jewels with which her robe was adorned. Greatly annoyed, the king looked hastily round the brilliant circle, then summoning the constable Montmorency to his side, he commanded him to take the princess in his arms and carry her to the chapel. This was done, and the ceremony went forward; after which a banquet and ball followed, at which Jeanne was compelled to be present, by the express command of the king. After a while she was permitted to retire to her mother's apartments, where, in fulfilment of a previous promise, the Duke of Cleves solemnly committed his youthful bride to the care of Margaret for three years,

engaging in that time neither to see nor claim her. He then departed from the court, while the princess, gladly taking leave of her uncle, accompanied her parents to the castle of Nérac, whence they proceeded to spend the winter in Pau.

XIII.

Life at the Castle of Pau.

And now, for the first time since her infancy, Jeanne d'Albret was domesticated with the mother she loved and venerated, and her happiness was so intense, that she almost forgot the price at which it had been purchased. Her health returned, her spirits rose, her lip was wreathed in smiles, and she was once more the gay, light-hearted child who sported in the gardens of Louray. Mounted on a shaggy Aragonese pony, and attended only by one old servant, she took long rides among the mountains, visiting the cottages of the peasantry, and listening with ever fresh delight to their stories of the goodness of her mother Queen Margaret. When

study hours were over, she sang and played on the spinnet, or walked with her young associates, eager to explore the charming country, which differed so widely from her former residence in France.

But the happiest seasons she ever knew were those spent by the princess in the private apartments of Queen Margaret, when, seated at her feet, she could gaze unchecked on that sweet face, and listen to the words of wisdom that flowed from those beloved lips. The vehemence of her character became insensibly softened under such an influence, and her education advanced rapidly, though rather from association with the learned men of the court than the study of books, for her lively temperament rendered constant application irksome to her.

Jeanne had been trained up in the bosom of the Romish church, and when

she went to Béarn, was strongly prejudiced against the Lutheran faith, principally, as she herself tells us, because she thought the reformed preachers wanting in gratitude towards their illustrious patroness the queen. But the silent influence of Margaret's example, the loveliness of her life and character, and the words, "fitly spoken," dropped by her from time to time when alone with her daughter—all these were operating on the mind and heart of the young girl, who had always been fearless in following out her convictions of truth. She had from childhood been in the habit of probing the motives of those about her, and of penetrating to the origin of everything that claimed to be truth, and this rendered her liable to be impressed by the doctrines of reform. Her spirit of inquiry was not checked in its search after truth by Lefevre and Farel, as it

had been at Plessis, nor was she arrested by the fearful barrier so often opposed to her reasonings by the bishop of Maçon—the authority of the holy church.

Every day she studied the Scriptures under the guidance of her mother and of Gerard Roussel, bishop of Oléron, almoner to the queen, a prelate of rare intelligence and devoted piety. One circumstance alone checked the progress of Jeanne and made the new faith distasteful to her. The Duke of Cleves, her betrothed husband, was a Lutheran, and any thing which seemed to strengthen the hated bond between them became at once repugnant to the princess. Nevertheless the lessons she heard from the eloquent lips of her mother and from the teachers left upon her mind an indelible impression, and in the coming years brought forth a plentiful harvest.

The time was now at hand when, according to the contract, the Duke of Cleves was to claim his bride; but his political fortunes had greatly changed, and he was now in no situation to receive her. The emperor had been greatly displeased with his vassal for daring to ally himself with the heiress of Navarre; and at the head of an army of forty thousand infantry and eight thousand horse invaded the duchy of Cleves, and overrunning it, took all the strongest towns and castles before the duke was aware of his danger. The conquest was complete. The Duke of Cleves was compelled to humble himself before his haughty suzerain and accept the most humiliating conditions, giving up the fairest portions of his dominions. A vassal thus stripped and spoiled was not likely to claim the hand of a princess who brought him a crown as her dowry.

Meanwhile the French king, ignorant of the state of affairs, had written to Margaret, commanding her to send on Jeanne without delay to Luxembourg, whence he would himself escort her to her husband at Aix. The despair of the princess on hearing this intelligence was overwhelming. She protested with tears that she should die if forced to obey the summons of her uncle, and entreated her parents to save her from exile and from a destiny which she shuddered even to contemplate. Margaret wept with her child; but though her heart was torn with anguish, she had never yet disputed the will of her brother, and would not, though it had led her to the scaffold or the stake.

After a farewell which was agonizing to both, the mother and daughter parted, and the latter set forth, in company with her father, for her new home. When the

royal travellers reached the city of Soissons, they remained there for one night to recruit the strength of the princess, who was overcome with fatigue and sorrow. At midnight a messenger came from the camp, bearing despatches from Francis to the Cardinal du Bellay, in which the king directed his niece to return and take up her abode with his queen Eleanora at Fontainebleau until he could decide on the course to be taken under the circumstances.

The joy of the princess at this unhoped-for escape was intense, and her father shared the satisfaction she felt, for the alliance had been distasteful to him in every point of view. He hastened to conduct his daughter from the frontier, fearful even yet lest some sudden change might render it necessary to give her up. When Margaret heard of the humbling concessions made by the Duke of Cleves

to Charles, her indignation was extreme, and she wrote the king, cordially assenting to his wish of annulling the marriage.

"Monseigneur," she wrote, "I would rather see my daughter in her grave, than know her to be in the power of a man who has deceived us all, and inflicted so foul a stain on his own honor."

Now, for the first time, the princess was suffered to state her objections to the alliance, and the protests, formerly disregarded, became important state documents. Application was made to the pope at Rome for a bull annulling the marriage, on the ground of the violence done to the wishes of the princess through the whole affair. Her protests were forwarded to Rome, to which a third was added, and after a tedious delay, the ill-omened bond was broken, and the parties declared free to contract marriage with other individuals.

Freed from the shackles she had worn so long, Jeanne returned to the court of her mother in a very different state of mind from that in which she had quitted it. "The countenance of our fair princess," says the historian Olhagaray, "grew serene again, her deportment became cheerful, and she was once more the life of the company at the castle, for it had seemed very grievous to her to quit her parents and country to become the wife of a simple duke, when she might choose among the greatest princes of the blood royal. In fact, the emperor greatly desired her for his son Philip, and would have bestowed many advantages on our King Henry, who refused an alliance so hurtful to the crown of France, nor would he have it believed he ever desired such an event."

For two years after the dissolution of her marriage, Jeanne resided with her

mother at Béarn, though both Margaret and her daughter made frequent visits to the French court at St. Germain's and at Paris. As the king's health declined, he became more dependent on the society of his sister, his "other self," as he often called her, and no sacrifice was considered by her too great, if it added in any degree to his enjoyment. She had but recently left him, and was staying a few days at the nunnery of Tussou in Angoumois, when tidings reached her announcing his death. She was alone, having left her daughter at Plessis les Tours, while her husband King Henry was at Mont de Marsan, where he was soon joined by the princess, and together they held their mourning state for the late king during a month.

The new king, Henry II., had always loved and respected his aunt the queen of Navarre, and immediately on his ac-

cession invited her to court; but she was too much depressed in spirits to obey the summons, and during the short remainder of her life shunned the world, devoting herself to the care of her subjects, to prayer, and works of charity. Her influence over her royal nephew, which to the time of her death was undiminished, was always exerted in behalf of justice and mercy. And Henry was often heard to say to those around him,

"If it were not for my aunt Margaret, I should doubt the existence of such a thing as genuine goodness on the earth, but never have I been disappointed in her."

For the first few months of the marriage, the princess Jeanne was permitted to remain in Béarn with Margaret, whose health was such as to excite the alarm of her friends. But the heiress of that fair southern heritage was a per-

sonage of too much political importance to be overlooked or forgotten. The emperor was still bent on securing her hand for his son; and in a will dictated by him in Augsburg in 1548, he exhorts Philip to obtain, if possible, the heiress of Albret, "who is a princess of firm health, of admirable character, virtuous and good, and of heart worthy of her birth."

The French court, fearful this event might take place if Jeanne were left longer under the care of her father, who had always desired it, sent a mandate to Pau requiring the presence of the princess at Fontainebleau. The summons could not be disobeyed, and taking a tender leave of her mother, she departed from Béarn, accompanied by King Henry, who was to escort her to Paris.

Jeanne d'Albret had nearly completed

her twentieth year when she took her place at court as a star of the first magnitude. She had not the beauty or grace of her mother, but the expression of her countenance was charming; her large brown eyes were full of brilliancy and feeling, her manner lively and unaffected, and her demeanor noble and dignified. Her readiness and quick wit, and the frankness of her temper, made her the favorite of the court circle, and especially of her royal kinsman Henry II. For the young queen, Catharine de Medici, Jeanne felt an aversion she could not conquer, for with her innate love of truth she read the falsehood of the wily Italian; and her dislike was returned with interest, proving in after years the source of innumerable trials and misfortunes to the queen of Navarre.

The household of the princess in Paris was established on a scale of the most

lavish magnificence, and Queen Margaret often thought it necessary to admonish her daughter to be less profuse in her expenditure.

Like her mother and uncle, however, Jeanne knew not how to refuse a suppliant; and liberally supplied as she was, her treasury was frequently empty. Some of her pathetic appeals to her chancellor on these occasions, in favor of a deserving protégée, are still preserved, and are written in a manner so characteristic that they deserve to rank among the curiosities of literature.

When it became known at the French court that the hand of the princess of Navarre was again free, there were many claimants for her favor, among whom Antoine Duke de Vendome, and Francis Duke of Guise, were the most prominent. King Henry wished to bestow her upon one of the princes of the

blood royal of France, in order that her rich inheritance might not pass away from the crown, and he therefore favored the suit of the Duke de Vendome, who was of the house of Bourbon, and elder brother of Condé, whose son became the great Huguenot leader in the reign of Jeanne queen of Navarre. The duke was of the same age as the princess, and one of the handsomest and most captivating men of the court. But he was frivolous and vacillating, a luxurious, effeminate prince, devoid of fixed principle, always becoming the tool or victim of stronger minds, while he believed himself immovable as the law of the Medes and Persians.

As a soldier his reputation stood high, and he had served the king bravely in several pitched battles, but his love of ease and the caprice of his disposition prevented him from attaining high mili-

tary rank. But he was of noble presence, graceful in manner, fastidious in his attire, and deemed a model of elegance by all the titled dames of the court.

On the arrival of Jeanne at the French court, Antoine de Bourbon sought an immediate introduction, and was charmed with the animation and joyous spirits of the fair heiress. It is often said that those persons whose characters contrast most strongly, assimilate the most readily; and it is certain that the daughter of Margaret, with her serious temper, her commanding intellect, and love of truth, returned the admiration of the duke, and soon gave him the most decided encouragement. Antoine may have had no intention to deceive, but the strength and dignity of Jeanne's character naturally drew out all that was best and noblest in his own, and in re-

sponding to her elevated sentiments he came to imagine them really the promptings of his own heart. Certain it is that the princess knew little of the true character of the man she had chosen until years of married life revealed it to her; but whatever her disappointment may have been, it was borne in silence, and no mortal ear ever heard her complain.

XIV.

"The End of Earth."

The consent of the French king was easily obtained to the proposed alliance, for he was anxious to see his fair cousin happily settled. But on the part of the king and queen of Navarre, unexpected obstacles arose. Margaret, who understood the character of the duke, feared for the future happiness of her child; and her fears were prophetic: while King Henry, who was secretly unwilling to relinquish the prospect of the Spanish alliance, thought it beneath his gifted Jeanne to bestow her hand even upon a prince of the blood royal unless he had a crown to bestow.

But the French king was resolved to

bring the matter to a speedy conclusion, and summoned Henry and Margaret to Paris, in order that the marriage might take place without delay. At that time the Duke de Vendome was strongly inclined towards the doctrines of the reformed church, and this circumstance doubtless had an influence on the mind of Margaret, the ardent friend and patroness of the reformers. She received her intended son-in-law with the courtesy and grace peculiar to her; and in the last state ceremonial at which she was present, the duke rode by the side of the litter in which Jeanne and her mother sat, and the attention he received from Margaret was remarked by all the spectators.

The favor of the king of Navarre was purchased by a pension of fifteen thousand livres and a promise of aid to recover his kingdom of Navarre, and the

marriage contract between Jeanne d'Albret and Antoine de Bourbon was signed at Moulins, in 1548, in the presence of the whole court.

It was stipulated on the part of the parents of the bride that in case of children being born to the youthful pair, their eldest son should succeed to the heritage of both parents, and that he should bear the arms of France and Navarre. In case of widowhood, Jeanne was declared sole guardian and tutoress of her children.

Besides this, as if a dark foreshadowing of the future was visible to the queen of Navarre, she caused an article to be inserted expressly stating that Jeanne was to be responsible to no one for the education and nurture she might choose to bestow on her children, and that until her son should attain his majority he was to be subject alone to her control.

The contract was witnessed by three public notaries, and signed by three secretaries of state.

After the marriage ceremony, the Duke and Duchess de Vendome left the court and proceeded to Pau, that Jeanne might receive the homage of her states of Béarn and the formal recognition of her rights as heiress to the crown.

The people came in crowds to welcome their princess and her husband, whose religious sympathies were hailed with rapture by the Béarnois. The duke, with his usual tact, saw that the loyal people of Béarn had two ruling passions—love for their good Queen Margaret, and attachment to the religion she had introduced among them. To Queen Margaret, therefore, and her Lutheran ministers, he paid the most devoted homage, and in consequence won golden opinions from all classes in

the principality. His young duchess, too honest and truthful to feign an interest she did not then feel, continued to uphold the prelates of the Romish church, though she treated the reformed preachers with the courtesy and kindness due to the friends of her illustrious mother. Her belief in the papacy had been shaken during her residence in Béarn, but she was not yet prepared to throw off her allegiance to Rome, and no motives of interest could induce her to feign what she did not feel. With the duke it was very different. Policy was to him in the place of principle; and as self-interest was through life his creed, he perceived the advantage to be derived from avowing himself a Lutheran; nor was he disappointed. The name of Antoine de Bourbon was associated with that of his wife in the formula of recognition by which the states

acknowledged the successors of their present king and queen.

The last gleam of earthly sunshine which lighted up the pathway of the queen of Navarre faded away when her cherished daughter left Pau for her husband's castle of La Ferté in Vendome. Her health had been steadily failing ever since the death of Francis, and it seemed as though the mysterious tie that united the Valois brother and sister rendered it impossible for her to live after his departure. For a brief season indeed her sinking energies were rekindled by the dangers which threatened her kingdom; for the emperor, irritated by the marriage of Jeanne, formally annexed Navarre to Spain, and made preparations for the invasion of Béarn. On hearing this news, Margaret was her own noble self once more. She urged her husband to action, made large

levies of troops, and strengthened the fortifications of Bayonne and Navarreins, two of her strongest towns. Well knowing that her presence would do more to excite the enthusiasm of her people than all other means combined, she left Pau, feeble as she was, for a progress through her dominions. As she was about to enter the litter in waiting for her at the gates of the castle, she turned to the Countess Fiésque, on whose arm she leaned, and said, with a sweet though sad smile:

"I am about to leave this beloved house for ever, for my eyes will never behold it again. But I am not uneasy, for I have long tried to acquaint myself with my better and enduring home, and have no fear of being turned out of doors when this brief life is over. God, I am well assured, will carry forward the work he has permitted me to commence,

and my place will be more than filled by my daughter, who has the energy and moral courage in which, I fear, I have been deficient. The good seed has been sown in her heart, and will certainly spring up and bear abundant fruit."

The words of Margaret were prophetic; for of all the noble army of confessors raised up by God in that age to bear witness to his truth, Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre, was one of the most fearless and illustrious.

Margaret had only reached the castle of Odos in Bigorre, when she became unable to proceed farther; and before her terrified attendants had time to summon the king or the Duchess de Vendome, she breathed her last in the midst of her weeping train, on the 21st of December, 1548, in less than two years after the death of the king of France.

It is impossible to describe the dis-

tress and consternation with which the whole kingdom was filled on learning this sad intelligence. The Béarnois had never associated the idea of death with that of their gracious and beautiful queen, on whom they had learned to depend as a kind of external providence, given them by God himself to teach them the way to his throne. Now she had left them, and that too at a time when their need was greatest. Had Charles followed up his advantage in the first moment of national sorrow, he would have found Béarn an easy prey; but this little corner of France was yet to prove the cradle of the French reformation, and escaped for this time as a bird from the snare of the fowler.

The loss of her admirable mother was deeply felt by the Duchess de Vendome, and years afterwards she was accustomed to speak of it as one of the great-

est calamities of her life. It was not only her own loss of the affection and guidance of her beloved mother that she mourned; the queen of Navarre possessed more influence over the wayward duke than any other person, and alone had power to check his visionary projects. Her gentle firmness and winning courtesy, the *prestige* of her great name throughout the kingdom, and her influence at the French court, all combined to impress the weak mind of Antoine and to command his deference and respect. Her father too, the king of Navarre, deprived of his guiding-star, gave up the reins of power into the hands of his daughter, and sank into a kind of imbecility, which rendered him only the shadow of a king.

Henry d'Albret had never been more than half-hearted in his acceptance of the doctrines of the reformation, and but

for Margaret's personal influence, would long since have given them a summary dismissal from his thoughts and his dominions. Now that he had lost all that gave brightness and interest to his life, he was unwilling to do violence to her memory by a change of religion which involved so much; and shutting himself up in his palace, gladly left to his daughter, the energetic young duchess of Vendome, the exclusive management of both church and state.

"Do as you please," he said to her once in answer to some inquiry; "I leave it all in your hands, only make sure that your mother the queen would have approved your measures. Should I ever have a grandson, I shall claim the right of directing his education after my own ideas; in aught else you are free to act as you list."

These words of the king were not for-

gotten; and when Jeanne's son, afterwards the great Henri Quatre, was born, his grandfather claimed the entire control of the royal infant, educating him in the old Béarnois habits of hardihood and simplicity, and thus preparing him for his glorious career.

XV.

Conclusion.

Margaret of Valois, "the pearl of Navarre," as her brother fondly termed her, was no more. In the rich prime of her womanhood and in the midst of her usefulness, ere yet age had dimmed the lustre of her eye or chilled the warm affections of her heart, she had gone down to the grave amid the tears and unavailing lamentations of a whole people.

"By the death of our good queen," says the Béarnois historian, "the nation was suddenly orphaned, and a wail like that of Rachel weeping for her children was heard through the length and breadth of the land."

In every dwelling, from the stately castles of Pau and Nérac, down to the humble chalet of the mountain herdsman, hearts were found bowed down with sorrow for the common loss, for of Margaret it was literally true,

> "None knew her but to love her,
> Nor named her but to praise."

Even in the French court, where by tacit agreement sorrow and death were prohibited subjects, there was mourning for the queen of Navarre far more real than that which had followed the death of their proud and splendid monarch.

"Edward wins provinces, Philippa conquers hearts," was once said of an English king and queen, and the saying might with equal truth have been applied to Margaret and Francis. With the exception of the Romish priesthood, who hated her as the firm patroness of what they called heresy, the queen of

Navarre had no enemies; for even jealousy and envy were subdued by the gentleness and uniform kindness that marked her demeanor.

The king of France was wont to say that his sister's generosity was a premium on ill-nature and malignity; but the assertion was not warranted by fact, since some of those who were afterwards Margaret's firmest friends were won over by the nobleness which would not take or remember an offence.

But while all ranks and classes were united in lamenting the loss they had sustained, the clergy of the reformed church in Béarn, and the nobles who had adopted their faith, had most cause for apprehension and sorrow.

The king was not firmly their friend; the young princess, in whose hands were the reins of government, had been educated in the bosom of the Catholic church,

and as yet had given no indication of a change of sentiment; and though her husband the Duke de Vendome made flattering professions of attachment to their cause, they had already learned enough of him to feel little confidence in his stability. A powerful enemy was beyond the Pyrennees, waiting only for a favorable pretext for advancing upon the provinces he had so long coveted, and the king of France was at best only a lukewarm ally, even if the papal influence failed to convert him into an active auxiliary of Spain. What was to save the infant church from the ruin that seemed impending over it? The aged Lefevre had gone home to his rest, cherished tenderly to the last in the palace of Pau by the care of Margaret; but Farel and his faithful brother Gerard Roussel, bishop of Oléron, were left to breast the storm; and strong in the Lord as they

had proved themselves, they trembled for the safety of the ark in this moment of peril.

But He who once said, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," had purposes of mercy towards the Béarnois, and saved their little mountain nest from the destruction which threatened to overwhelm it. The young king of France had not yet forgotten his father's captivity and rigorous treatment, nor his own forced sojourn in Spain, and it seemed to him unnatural and monstrous to join the enemy of his house in a crusade against the dominions of the aunt whom he had loved so fondly. Charles was not in circumstances to brave the power of the French by taking a step which they would be certain to resist, and therefore his pet project was defer-

red, never, as it afterwards proved, to be resumed.

Added to this state policy, there was another and even more powerful reason why the friends of the reformation were enabled to hold the ground they had gained in this portion of Navarre. The religion of the Bible had taken deep root in the hearts of the Béarnois from the circumstances of its introduction.

Until their late queen came to Navarre, the peasantry had been accustomed to think of their princes as of beings so far removed from themselves in the scale of humanity, that there could be no feeling in common between them and the lower classes. They were loyal from habit and instinct; but they looked on the inhabitants of the palace as they did on the stars that glittered above their heads, as something quite out of their sphere and beyond their compre-

hension. Suddenly all this was changed. A woman, young and noble, more beautiful than their imagination of the angels, came to their cabins without pomp or retinue, seated herself between the mother and the children, not as a condescending superior, but as a friend; and made herself acquainted with their wants and necessities, their joys and sorrows, for the purpose of doing them good.

At first they could not believe that this kind and gentle woman, to whom they found themselves speaking freely, was the queen about whom they had heard so much, and of whom they always thought as seated on a throne, with a jewelled crown on her head and kneeling crowds around her. But as they came to know her better, loyalty became enthusiasm, and they loved her with a devotion that was bounded only by their capacity of feeling. They had

been trampled under foot, and their scanty earnings wrung from them to the last farthing by the Romish priesthood; but the "good queen" told them of Jesus and his love for poor sinners, and her ministers brought them the tidings of salvation without money and without price, evidently seeking "not theirs, but them." Was it any wonder that such a gospel should be gladly welcomed by the poor mountaineers, or that, having embraced it, they should resolve to part with it only with their lives? Precious beyond all valuation as it was in the hopes and privileges it bestowed upon them, its worth was enhanced by the channel through which it had flowed into their hearts. In proportion to their love and veneration for Margaret, was their devotion to the doctrines first heard from her lips; and when death had sanctified that affection and ren-

dered it immortal, the lessons she had taught became a part of themselves and were dearer than life itself.

To the Duchess of Vendome, as the child of their beloved benefactress, the Béarnois at once transferred allegiance; and when she saw how entirely it was taken for granted by these simple people that the faith of the mother was that of the daughter, Jeanne could not find it in her heart to undeceive them; so that in after-years, when she had become the firm and devoted leader of the Huguenot party, her subjects never knew how near they had been at one time to that which they regarded as the worst of evils; namely, renewed subjection to the church of Rome.

After the death of her beloved mother, the princess cultivated more friendly relations with the reformed pastors, chiefly from respect to her memory; but though

her intellect was partially convinced, her heart was still untouched; and truthful as she was, nothing could have induced Jeanne d'Albret to profess a feeling which had no existence. Still, while herself a member of the Romish communion, toleration was enforced throughout Navarre, even in those provinces that blindly adhered to the see of Rome; and as the Duke of Vendome was nominally a Protestant, the infant church grew and prospered, gradually leavening the surrounding states, until its dimensions alarmed the pope and his devoted relative and adherent, Catharine de Medici, now queen of France. Catharine hated Jeanne d'Albret, whose character was in every respect the reverse of her own, and she hated the reformation with all the intensity of a blind bigotry; but it was her policy to play off the different parties in the kingdom against each

other, in order to hold herself the balance of power, and she had long since learned to wait and bide her time, that she might strike the more surely in the end. She therefore temporized and equivocated, assuring the friends of the reformation that they might rely upon her kind offices, though her intercourse with Rome was constant and confidential.

While things were in this state, Jeanne became the happy mother of a son, afterwards so renowned as the Huguenot leader and monarch of France, Henry Fourth. The royal infant was born December, 1553, four years after the death of Margaret, in the castle of Pau, whither the duchess had come at her father's request, that his supervision of the child might commence from the first hour of its existence.

The king had little confidence in the

character or principles of his son-in-law; and though his respect for Jeanne was unbounded, he feared lest a mother's fondness should interfere with his cherished plans for the education of his grandchild, whom he had resolved to train up after the ancient fashion of the Béarnois. Accordingly, the princely boy was sent, almost in infancy, to the castle of Courasse, where, under the care of his tutor, M. de Montfauçon, he was early inured to hardships and privations of every kind, eating the coarsest food, and sleeping on a pallet of straw, while he was allowed no control over his young companions, save what he acquired by virtue of his superior skill and prowess. At stated periods he made visits of ceremony to his mother and grandfather at the castle, and as the duchess witnessed his rapid growth and improvement, she was consoled for a

separation which had at first been very bitter. But absorbed as she was in the cares and anxieties incident to her exalted station, Jeanne had little leisure for the indulgence of the domestic affections, even had her lot in life been happier than she found it. Her father had become increasingly irritable and hard to please, and since the death of Margaret had thrown the whole burden of authority upon the shoulders of his daughter, who, though young and inexperienced, had managed affairs with so much wisdom and discretion that she had won the admiration of all, enemies as well as friends. Her husband was vain and capricious, fond of the semblance of power, though shrinking from the exertion necessary to maintain the reality, and Jeanne soon found how little dependence could be placed on his advice or assistance in an emergency.

Happily for her, Condé, the younger brother of the duke, was a man of very different stamp, and with him were associated other noblemen whose honor had never known a stain, and whose names were a tower of strength to the Huguenot party. Without fully sympathizing in their religious views, Jeanne trusted them implicitly, for they had been the tried friends of her revered mother, and now rallied round her with a zeal and devotion which her noble nature well knew how to appreciate.

When the young Henry had reached his ninth year, the famous conference, known as the "Colloquy of Poissy," took place, between the Catholics, represented by the cardinal of Lorraine, uncle of Mary queen of Scots, on one side, and Theodore Beza, Peter Martyr, and other eminent men, on the part of the reformers. It was convened by Catharine

de Medici, now a widow and regent of France, under the pretext of wishing to bring together the opposing parties, that she might make peace between them, but in reality that she might measure the strength of her opponents and gain time to mature her own plans. The pope was at first violently opposed to such a conference, for it was contrary to the whole policy of the Romish church, which claims infallibility and denies the right of private judgment, which a public disputation would seem to acknowledge. He was, however, prevailed upon to consent, doubtless by arguments with which the treacherous Italian was only too familiar, and on the 13th of August, 1561, the disputants came together at a place called Poissy, from which the conference takes its name.

After lasting several days, the disputation ended, as such discussions usually

do, by leaving each party more firmly settled in its own belief. One result, however, had been attained, the importance of which could hardly be overestimated. Jeanne d'Albret, who had now become, by the death of her father, queen of Navarre, was present, and yielding to the arguments of the reformers, became a convert to the truth, which was ever afterwards dearer to her than life. Strange to say, however, the process which produced this result in the mind of the wife, had an effect directly opposite on that of her husband. Antoine listened with all the attention he could command, and professing himself convinced of his errors, begged permission to return to the bosom of the church, from which he had ignorantly and foolishly wandered. This conversion was a source of great rejoicing to Catharine, who well knew the pain it

would inflict on her hated relative the queen of Navarre; and though in her heart she despised the weak Antoine, she treated him with the utmost cordiality, inviting him to Paris while Jeanne returned alone to Navarre, promising to recognize his rights as first peer of France and governor of Guienne. These promises were never fulfilled, but they served to cajole the king and detain him at court, while his heroic wife was left alone to breast the storm which now began to lower on the political horizon.

One solace was left the queen which compensated for many sorrows. Her young son, now a noble, spirited boy, was left to her sole guardianship; since, in spite of Catharine's remonstrances, Antoine refused to burden himself with the care of the young Henry, or to remove him from Navarre. It was evident that if the Huguenots wished to

maintain their rights, recourse must be had to the sword, and Jeanne solemnly consecrated her beloved son to the work of defending his religion and his country from those who sought to destroy both. Having once embraced the faith of the reformers, no doubts or misgivings were suffered to disturb her mind or fetter her movements. The Bible, open and unchained, was her counsellor and guide, and wherever that led she was prepared fearlessly to follow. Simple, truthful, and ingenuous in character, Jeanne d'Albret possessed a vigor and strength of intellect which enabled her to grasp alike the grand outlines and minute details of every subject presented to her, and which eminently fitted her for the position she occupied as the head of the Huguenot party. In prosperity she was humble and watchful, in adversity calm and undismayed; trusting God alike in

storm and sunshine, with a confidence which nothing earthly had power to shake.

The Huguenot party, at the time of Jeanne's accession to the throne, was comparatively small and weak, and, humanly speaking, nothing seemed easier than to crush it by the strong hand of power. But in defending his church, God makes the wrath of man to praise him, and restrains the remainder thereof; and in this instance the wily policy of Catharine de Medicis was made to subserve the purposes of the Most High. Two strong passions—religious intolerance and personal enmity—urged her to crush the new religion ere yet it had attained a more formidable growth. She hated its champions, Coligny, Condé, La Noué, and, above all, the qneen of Navarre, with an intensity which could be satisfied with nothing short of their de-

struction; but she was an Italian, and could smile while preparing to stab her victim to the heart. Moreover, her devotion to the see of Rome inclined her to take the severest measures when dealing with heretics, even in cases where she was influenced by no private feeling of revenge.

On the other hand, Catharine's love of power, the master-passion of her breast, led her to look with suspicion on the vast influence of the house of Guise, the members of which were gradually usurping a degree of authority both in church and state which threatened to overshadow that of the monarch of France. The Duke of Guise, the idol of the people, and his brother the cardinal of Lorraine, were loud and fierce in their denunciations of the Huguenots, and urged the queen regent to proceed against them with the utmost rigor. She

would gladly have followed this advice, so much in unison with her own feelings; but when Coligny, Condé, and the other Huguenot chiefs were put down, what would be left to balance the power of the haughty Guises, which even now shook the very foundations of the throne? In the present condition of parties in France, it was far better to use her enemies in harassing and weakening each other; and accordingly this was the policy to which for many years Catharine steadily adhered. When the queen of Navarre and her party gained any important advantage, the queen-mother broke the most solemn treaties without scruple, and sent out large armies against them; but when the tide of victory was turned, and they seemed about to be swallowed up, she was ready to come to terms, and to make fair promises which were never to be fulfilled.

One thing was fixed and settled with her—the hated sect must be destroyed, root and branch, but not until it could be done with entire safety to herself and her sons, and for this she was willing to watch and wait. Jeanne d'Albret, with her accustomed penetration, read the plans of Catharine, and in many instances counteracted them effectually, but the struggle taxed every energy of mind and body, and broke down a physique which seemed formed to last for a century. She died at the early age of forty-three, in Paris, whither she had gone to be present at the marriage of her son with Margaret of Valois, Catharine's youngest daughter. It was long supposed that her death was occasioned by poison, the well-known agent of Catharine in disposing of her enemies; but later testimony renders this improbable, as an examination after death revealed

extensive disease in the stomach and lungs, of which the noble sufferer was herself aware, though with heroic courage she concealed it from every human eye.

She was taken from the evil to come, for the massacre of St. Bartholomew took place only a few weeks after her death, that fearful tragedy for which the marriage and its attendant scenes were only a preparation and a cloak.

We cannot trace here the varied fortunes of Margaret's grandson through the years that followed the death of his mother, till at length he ascended the throne of France. It is greatly to be deplored that a record so bright as that of Henry Quatre should be sullied by his abjuration of the reformed faith, which took place a few years before his death. A Huguenot from early education and intellectual conviction, rather

than from the assent of the heart to the pure and holy doctrines of the Gospel, Henry suffered himself to be persuaded that the best interests of his kingdom, and even of religion, required this step; but though he became outwardly a Romanist, his most trusted friends and counsellors were Huguenots, and he enforced entire freedom of belief throughout his dominions. The famous Edict of Nantes, issued in his reign, secured toleration for all; and until its revocation, towards the close of the next century, the Huguenots had rest and peace, and were built up in the faith under pastors and teachers of their own selection.

But it was among the hills and valleys of Henry's native Béarn that the reformed faith struck its roots deepest and flourished most vigorously; and there the memory of their "good

queens," Margaret and Jeanne, were tenderly cherished and handed down from generation to generation, till the last one who had ever looked on the face of either had vanished from the earth.

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